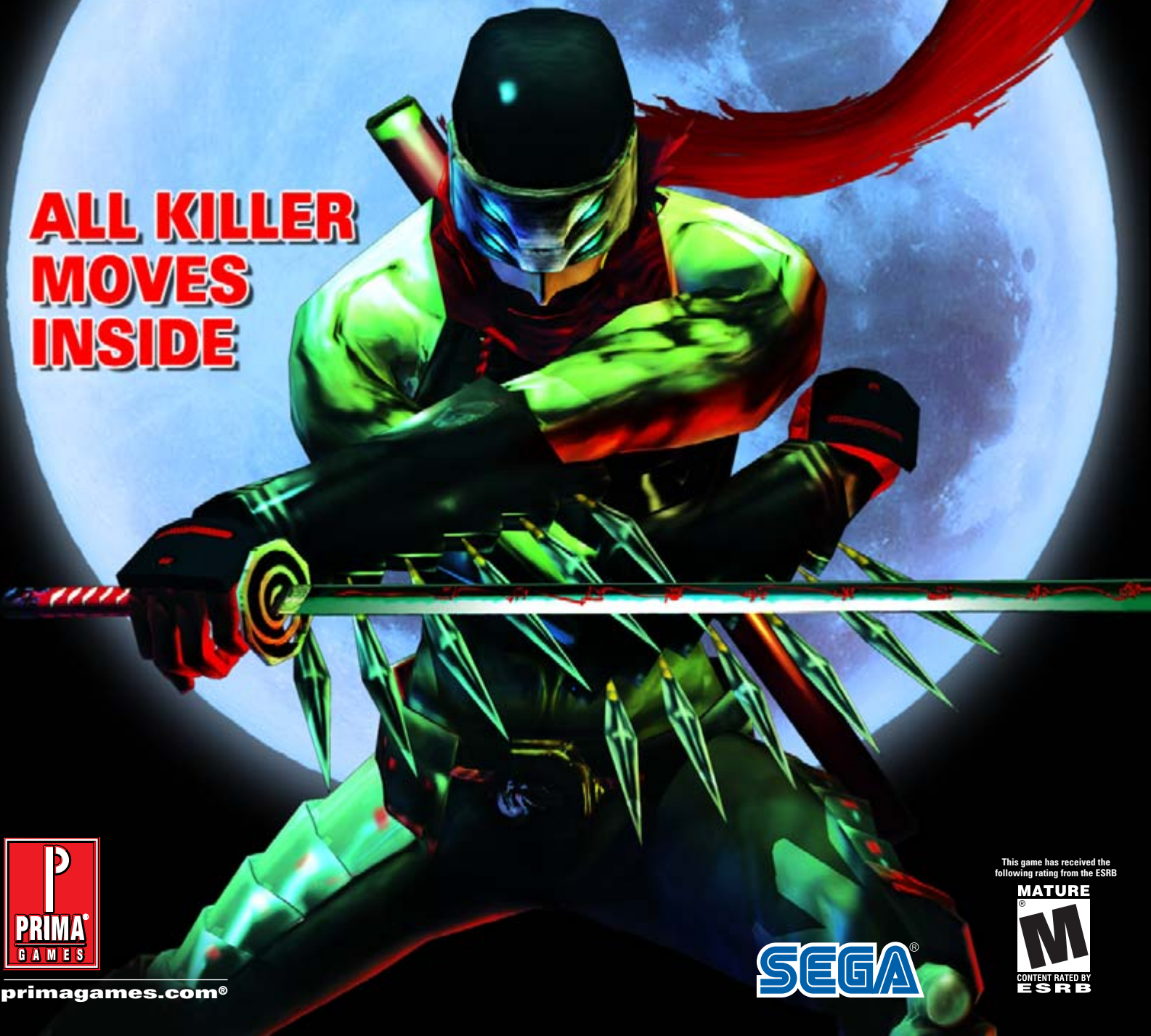


ShinobiTM

**ALL KILLER
MOVES
INSIDE**



primagames.com[®]

SEGA[®]

This game has received the following rating from the ESRB

MATURE



Shinobi™

Prima's Official Strategy Guide

Eric Mylonas

Prima Games
A Division of Random House, Inc.

3000 Lava Ridge Court
Roseville, CA 95661
1-800-733-3000
www.primagames.com



Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Prelude to the Storm | 2 |
| Introduction: Biographies | 4 |
| The Way of the Ninja | 6 |
| The Essentials | 6 |
| The Ninja Arts | 8 |
| Stage 1A | 10 |
| Stage 1B | 16 |
| Stage 2A | 24 |
| Stage 2B | 30 |
| Stage 3A | 37 |
| Stage 3B | 44 |
| Stage 4A | 50 |
| Stage 4B | 56 |
| Stage 5A | 63 |
| Stage 5B | 70 |
| Stage 6A | 72 |
| Stage 6B | 80 |
| Stage 7A | 83 |
| Stage 7B | 90 |
| Stage 8A | 92 |
| Stage 8B | 100 |
| Secrets | 109 |
| Interview | 110 |



The Prima Games logo is a registered trademark of Random House, Inc., registered in the United States and other countries. Primagames.com is a registered trademark of Random House, Inc., registered in the United States.

© 2002-2004 by Prima Games. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without written permission from Prima Games. Prima Games is a division of Random House, Inc.

Associate Product Manager: Jill Hinckley
Project Editor: Matt Sumpter
Design & Layout: Kim Tran

SEGA is a registered trademark of SEGA CORPORATION. SEGA and Shinobi are registered trademarks or trademarks of Sega Corporation and its affiliates. ©OVERWORKS /SEGA, 2002. Original Game © 2002 SEGA CORPORATION. All Rights Reserved. www.sega.com "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved.

All products and characters mentioned in this book are trademarks of their respective companies.

Please be advised that the ESRB rating icons, "EC", "K-A", "E", "T", "M", "AO" and "RP" are copyrighted works and certification marks owned by the Interactive Digital Software Association and the Entertainment Software Rating Board and may only be used with their permission and authority. Under no circumstances may the rating icons be self-applied or used in connection with any product that has not been rated by the ESRB. For information regarding whether a product has been rated by the ESRB, please call the ESRB at 1-800-771-3772 or visit www.esrb.org. For information regarding licensing issues, please call the IDSA at (212) 223-8936. Please note that ESRB ratings only apply to the content of the game itself and does NOT apply to the content of this book.

Important:

Prima Games has made every effort to determine that the information contained in this book is accurate. However, the publisher makes no warranty, either expressed or implied, as to the accuracy, effectiveness, or completeness of the material in this book; nor does the publisher assume liability for damages, either incidental or consequential, that may result from using the information in this book. The publisher cannot provide information regarding game play, hints and strategies, or problems with hardware or software. Questions should be directed to the support numbers provided by the game and device manufacturers in their documentation. Some game tricks require precise timing and may require repeated attempts before the desired result is achieved.

ISBN: 0-7615-4009-1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 2002113670



Prelude to the Storm

A Legacy Forged in Fire, Tempered by Blood

"Come, young one, come and make yourself welcome. Perhaps I can fetch you some tea? We have many things to discuss, you and I, and perhaps it will do you some good. Maybe it'll put some color in those pallid cheeks of yours, no? Yes, yes, that's right, make yourself comfortable. After all, you have a long and arduous journey ahead, one fraught with peril of the most dire sort. You will need to conserve your strength for the dark days ahead, mmm?

Now then, I think, perhaps a glimpse into what has come before may be in

order, yes? For never forget: We cannot face an uncertain future without sharpening our swords on the lessons of the past, murky and half-remembered though they may be.

So listen intently, young one, for herein you shall find tales of days gone by, tales that echo through the dimly lit corridors of time. Perhaps they will aid you in your quest, perhaps not. But one thing is for certain: The struggles of those now behind may give you a greater appreciation for the labors which lay just ahead."

Shinobi (1987)



The first in the series, *Shinobi* pitted Joe Musashi, ninja extraordinaire, against the evil machinations of the Ring of Five: a band of ninja with skills to rival Joe's.

Code-named Shinobi, Joe struck out to rescue the children of the world leaders the RoF had kidnapped. Armed with sword, shuriken, and ninja magic, Joe took down the Ring of Five and emerged victorious!

Source Platform: Arcade
Ported To: Everything (well, almost)

The Revenge of Shinobi (1990)



They've assassinated your sensei (teacher) to keep you in line. Now they're determined to rule the world. They are the Neo Zeed, a shadowy terrorist organization bent on world domination.

Unfortunately for them, Joe doesn't take the hint and embarks on a quest to bring them to heel. Neither ninja nor mechanical dinosaurs prove to be a match for Musashi's mastery of ninjitsu.

Platform: Sega Genesis

Cyber Shinobi



They've assassinated your sensei (teacher) to keep you in line. Now they're determined to rule the world. They are the Neo Zeed, a shadowy terrorist organization bent on world domination.

Unfortunately for them, Joe doesn't take the hint and embarks on a quest to bring them to heel. Neither ninja nor mechanical dinosaurs prove to be a match for Musashi's mastery of ninjitsu.

Platform: Sega Genesis

Shadow Dancer— The Secret of Shinobi (1990)



After vanquishing the Neo Zeed, Joe took some time off in New York City to visit his friend Kato. Upon returning to Japan, Joe learned that Kato had been mortally wounded by a gang known only as Union Lizard while trying to rescue some school children the gang was holding hostage. Enraged, Joe returned to New York to avenge Kato's death, his only ally Kato's faithful dog Yamamoto.

Source Platform: Arcade
Ported To: Sega Genesis

GG Shinobi



Joe Musashi returns yet again, and this time he must save his fellow students from the City of Fear. By rescuing each—Blue, Yellow, Pink, Green—Joe managed to amass a stockpile of ninja magic and save the day once more. Does this guy ever rest?

Source: Sega Game Gear

GG Shinobi II



The Four Elemental Crystals have been stolen. Spirited away by a dark ninja in the employ of a shadowy terrorist organization. In the wrong hands, these crystals can spell doom for the people of the world. Enter Joe Musashi, ninja champion—if he can't save the world, who can?

Source: Sega Game Gear

Shinobi III (1993)



Joe thought he'd dealt a mortal blow to the Neo Zeed organization, but in time they managed to quietly rebuild their evil organization. But Musashi got wind of their plans and is on the warpath again to put an end to the Neo Zeed once and for all. However, the Neo Zeed is ready for him; this will prove to be Joe's toughest battle yet.

Source: Sega Genesis

Shinobi Legions (1995)



Not all the tales of the Shinobi and the Oboro clan are about Joe Musashi. There is also the story of brothers Sho and Kazuma. Trained in the arts of the Oboro clan, Kazuma becomes obsessed with power and kidnaps their sister, Aya. Enraged, Sho takes the name of Shinobi and speeds off on a quest to stop Kazuma's evil plan and to rescue Aya.

"Ah! You appear much better prepared for the trials and tribulations which lay ahead, and you even have some color in those cheeks!

Now it is time to gather up your courage and strength, mighty warrior—dark forces will seek to undo you at every turn, and you must be ever-vigilant against their vile predations. Let no creature of this world or the next stand in your way!

I wish you great success and good luck—may the gods see you to a great victory, your sword sheathed in the blood of those that would be so foolish to oppose you, Shinobi."

Introduction: Biographies

The Players

The stage is set for a battle of the ages: Hotsuma stands nearly alone against the demonic forces of the Hellspawn and their evil master, a vile being that has arrayed the dead of Hotsuma's Clan Oboro against him.

Armed with the cursed sword Akujiki and the grim knowledge that he must face his friends in mortal combat, he can count on few allies in his quest for vengeance, although he wouldn't have it any other way.

Hotsuma

You are Hotsuma, a ninja of the Oboro clan who is versed in myriad martial arts—a one-man killing machine out to save the world from the Hellspawn and their enigmatic master.

Four years ago, you were forced into a duel with your brother, Moritsune, over the fabled sword Akujiki, and you emerged the victor in the battle. Moritsune's final words, "my spirit shall always be by your side," haunt you to this day.

Now the dead of the Oboro clan, bereft of freewill but intent on the destruction of Tokyo, have returned to the world to menace the living. You must learn the source of this dire evil that would slay and then dare dishonor your clansmen.

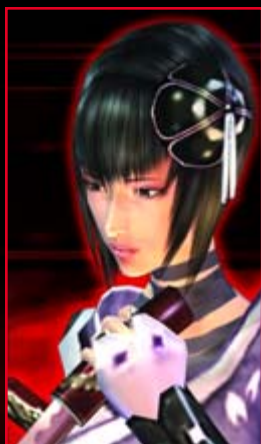
With Akujiki at your side, take the battle to the Hellspawn to right the grave wrongs committed against the Oboro clan as Tokyo burns in the background.

Akujiki, the Cursed Sword



Hotsuma's enchanted blade, Akujiki, feeds on the life force of others; the more blood it drinks, the more deadly it becomes. Unfortunately, if it does not receive a nearly constant ration of life-sustaining fluids, it will begin to feed on Hotsuma—an unpleasant side effect that will become more and more of a concern as he ventures deeper into his battles against the Hellspawn.





Ageha

Staunch member of the Oboro clan and a close ally of Hotsuma in the past, Ageha has now moved out on her own, leaving the clan behind.

Moritsune

Elder brother to Hotsuma, and slain at his hands, Moritsune schooled his younger sibling in the way of the ninja. All the skills Hotsuma possesses, he owes, in no small part, to the rigorous training supervised by his brother.

Although it's been four years since Moritsune's death, something is amiss. The dead of the Oboro clan again walk the earth, and rumor tells that Moritsune may be amongst them.



The Hellspawn



Demons from the foulest depths of the outer darkness, the Hellspawn answer to the one who has animated the dead of the Oboro clan and taken control of the souls of the living. They menace the world of man and have an appetite for only one thing: destruction.

They come in many shapes in sizes, from the horrific winged Mokugiyo to the two-headed, club-wielding Oni, and each has only one mission in mind: the snuffing of Hotsuma's life.

As if these horrific creatures weren't enough, Hotsuma also must contend with an army comprising the deceased ninja of his own clan.

The Possessed



Homura, Hakuraku, and Kizami (among numerous others) were loyal members of the Oboro clan. Sadly, they have been corrupted and placed under the sway of the evil force behind the grim tidings currently besetting Tokyo.

Each possesses mastery of a different weapon, and each will prove to be a very dangerous foe; they are among the deadliest "enemies" Hotsuma will face in one-on-one combat.

Hotsuma must turn his blade on each of these skilled warriors to grant them that which they desire above all: freedom.

The Sorcerer

Behind the vast demonic invasion of Tokyo, and the ultimate source from which all evil flows, this enigmatic individual directs the movement of his forces from a mysterious, extradimensional pagoda that Hotsuma must breach in the course of completing his quest.

The Sorcerer's desires and goals are unknown, but Hotsuma must first weather the storm that has been placed before him before he can learn the secrets of the wicked master behind so much pain and suffering.

If he isn't stopped, Tokyo, and then the world, will fall before the might of his unholy forces and his vast, demonic powers.



The Way of the Ninja

The Essentials

Hotsuma, in time, will become less a man and more a force of nature as Akujiki (his sword) gradually increases in effectiveness through a combination of innate skill and supernatural power. However, before that day comes, you must come to grips with the basics of his character.

Run



Hotsuma can move as if propelled by the four lords of the wind. Simply hold the Left Analog Stick and any Directional Button to make Hotsuma take off at a blinding pace. To make him walk, hold the Left Analog Stick a little off-center (you won't be doing much of this).

Double Jump



There is no doubt that Hotsuma can run, but can he also fly? No, but almost. Press **○** once to send him leaping into the air. Press **○** a second time to climb to even greater heights—the double jump.

Stealth Dash



Although Hotsuma is fast, the dash takes him one step further. Press **X** and steer Hotsuma in the direction you wish him to go. In rapid succession, these quick bursts of speed allow you to cover large amounts of ground in very short order.

Sword Attack



Control Hotsuma's left sword slashes by pressing **■**. Rapid, successive presses yield a four-hit chain combo, allowing Hotsuma to make short work of most minor foes.

Kick



Whenever enemies attempt to defend themselves, Hotsuma has access to a guard crush move via his swift kicks. Pressing down on the Left Analog Stick and **■** makes him deliver a crushing lightning kick. Follow that up with rapid sword strikes to handily bring down foes. Press the Left Analog Stick away from the enemy while locked on, then press **X**.

Spin Attack



Press toward your enemy with the Left Analog Stick while locked on, then press **X** to have Hotsuma execute a wicked Spin Attack.

Charge Attack



Press and hold **X** to perform a Charge Attack. Be careful, this move drains Hotsuma's soul.

Shuriken Attack/Shuriken Burst



Hotsuma has a clutch of shuriken at his disposal. Essentially small throwing knives, these wicked stingers will stun most foes not blocking, setting them up for an easy chain combo.

Hotsuma also has an electrical attack. At the apex of a double jump, press **▲** twice rapidly to conjure a globe of electricity that stuns all foes caught in its web of energy.

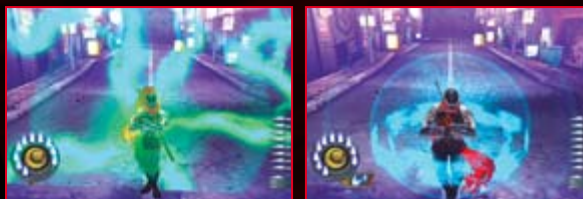
Lock-on Targeting



To differentiate between the packs of foes that mass against Hotsuma, press **R2** to make Hotsuma lock on to the nearest attacker, thereby directing all his energy to its destruction.

Press **R1** to toggle quickly between attackers, working your way from nearest to farthest if the situation calls for it (it will).

Ninjutu (Ninja Magic)



In addition to the supernatural powers housed within Akujiki's sleek frame, Hotsuma can call upon ninja magic by pressing **L2**. If the situation looks grim, do not hesitate to call upon the Fury of the Fire Storm, the Protection of Lightning, or the Blade of Energy. Use the Directional Buttons to toggle between different forms of magic.

Keep in mind, however, that ninja magic is a last resort and should be used sparingly; Hotsuma can replenish his stock only by finding scrolls scattered throughout the stages. It is better to hold them in reserve than to be caught wanting.

Wall Run



One of Hotsuma's key skills is the ability to stick and run along vertical surfaces. Simply jump at a nearby wall (note that only flat surfaces will work), and he will stick to the side. Press forward or back, and he'll run along the wall at breakneck speeds. Note that he *cannot* travel vertically up and down walls in this manner; if he wishes to climb up or down, he must jump.

Unlimited View



It's important for Hotsuma to maintain correct orientation as he wanders about the maze-like levels. Press **L1** to make Hotsuma swing his eyes directly in whatever direction he happens to be facing.

By using the Right Analog Stick, you can manipulate the camera to a limited degree, allowing Hotsuma to steal a peak around corners and obstacles that may otherwise block his view.

The Way of the Ninja

The Ninja Arts

Hotsuma is a formidable foe even at the most basic of levels, but there are much greater depths of skill and ability he can attain with a measure of self-discipline and feverish practice.

The Art of the Blade

Although a mere press or series of presses will initiate a sword-swinging attack, there is more—much more—to it than initially meets the eye. Akujiki is more than your run-of-the-mill blade.



Akujiki's formidable powers allow it to draw on the life force of those vanquished by its keen edge. With each successive strike, its power grows, starting at the mundane color of steel, progressing to a blue-hued blade and, finally, to the hyperdestructive purple blade. The number of successful kills required to power up the blade depends on the stage; the deeper you delve, the more Akujiki's hunger grows.

Note

Although Akujiki is a formidable sword, you will not gain its advantages (nor suffer its ill effects) until you reach the second stage.

The Art of the Dash

A simple press of the dash button may allow Hotsuma to cover great distances fairly quickly, but what lurks just beneath the surface is a sight to behold.



Although Hotsuma does command a spectacular double-jump, sometimes foes (and the safety of nearby ledges) lay just out of reach. By combining the dash with the double-jump, Hotsuma can strike those who think they are blessedly safe from the dread kiss of Akujiki. Simply jump (or double jump), lock on to your foe [R1], and press X—you'll storm toward them with the unchained fury of a lightning bolt. Cap that off with a sword strike to make it a lesson an enemy won't soon forget.

Also note that with each successful strike, Hotsuma regains the ability to dash one more time; by doing this, you can journey out over vast, bottomless pits, then make a safe return to solid ground.

Another key component of the dash: *press the advantage*. If a foe is knocked onto his back after a slash or two, continue to dash at him until he's finished. Don't give him room to breathe or time to recover. The same goes for standing foes that are knocked back just out of range—keep the pressure on!

The Art of the Combo

Yes, you can manage a simple chain combo by repeatedly pressing **■**, but there is a much more efficient (and spectacular) way to dispatch nearly every enemy Hotsuma will face.

By expanding upon the earlier chain combo system and the subsequent powering up of Akujiki with each successful kill, Hotsuma can mangle whole legions of enemies, both land- and air-based, by skillfully melding the Art of the Blade with the Art of the Dash.



Attack with fury: the first foe goes down in a spray of arterial blood.



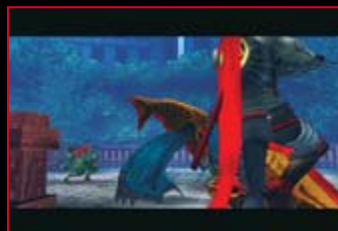
Continuing to hold the "lock-on" button (**R1**), dash toward your second foe and slay him where he stands.



Second foe dispatched, jump into the air, lock on, and dash toward your third foe. If necessary, repeatedly dash after each successful hit until he's cut to ribbons.



With the third enemy shredded, continue holding **R1** and dash toward the next available foe, and take him out.



Finish the combo by dashing at the final foe and taking him down in a single fierce swipe!

By the time you've executed this combo (in mere seconds), you'll have not only eliminated five potential threats but, more importantly, you'll also wind up feeding Akujiki *twice* the amount of blood that it would ordinarily draw if you dealt with these enemies one at a time.

Keep in mind that you have a limited window (a few seconds) in which to slay each attacker, or the combo will break down and you won't get the full benefit of annihilating all in one fell swoop.

This tactic is *imperative* when dealing with bosses. Normal attacks will do miniscule damage to the various overlords scattered throughout the game. But, by building up your sword's power with each kill, you can take down most bosses in three strikes (tops) if your sword is fully powered (after five or more successive kills).

Note that you can build bigger and better combos depending on the number of foes on-screen. Combos can be built to sizes in excess of nine kills, which will net Akujiki plenty of food (thereby sparing your life bar) in addition to garnering a much better rank at the conclusion of the stage.



Stage 1A

The Journey Begins



Hotsuma's adventure begins as the helicopter he is riding into Tokyo is blown out of the sky by Hellspawn. He leaps to safety, and the battle is joined on the streets of Tokyo below.



Upon entering the city, head forward at a brisk pace, and a ninja materializes before you. Deal with him harshly.



With that foe dispatched, continue forward and deal with two more ninja directly in your path. Practice using the lock-on to deal with one...



...and then the other.



Those foes neutralized, continue forward and claim the extra shuriken.



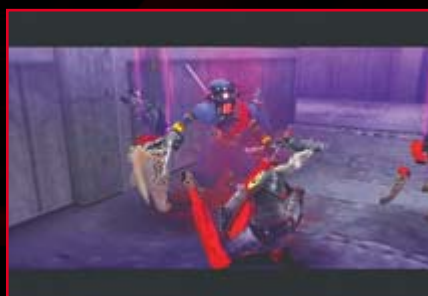
Following the path as it turns right, you come upon a city square populated by many Hellspawn dogs. Head left as you exit the alley and deal with them one at a time or (preferably) as a group.



With the hounds put to sleep, make your way to the low wall in the corner, leap up and get the extra ninja magic and, if you need it, the health pick-up one step higher.



Gear collected, note the three ninja below, lock on, and dive into the fray with reckless abandon.



Head down the next alley and deal with a pair each of ninja and dogs.



Exiting that alley, turn right to face down two more ninja and a tank at the far end of the road. Deal with the ninja, then head for the tank.

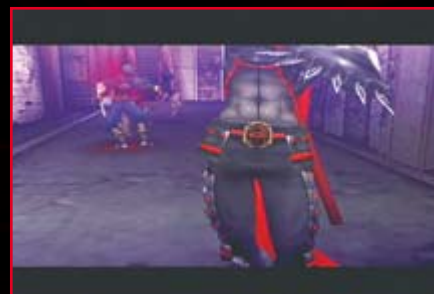
Stage 1A The Journey Begins



As you approach this monstrosity, dodge the incoming shells and watch the tank's barrel as it heats up to deliver a staggering spinning blow. Lock on, mount the tank, and turn it to scrap. Beware that two more ninja will try to take advantage of the seemingly unfair situation.



Head down the alley next to the former tank and mount the nearby wall to avoid the brackish spray coming from the walls. Make your way from wall to wall till you reach a shuriken at the other end.



Now drop back down to the road and deal with another set of dogs and ninja. If you let them group together, two strokes can take out the entire pack.

Stage 1A The Journey Begins



Make your way to the health pick-up at the terminus of the alley. Snap that up, then take a left and leap-dash to capture the shuriken.



Once you gather the shuriken, continue forward into the nearby narrow alley. Drop down, and you are accosted by four ninja. Deal with them painfully.



Take a quick left down the next alley to a cul-de-sac. Mind the black vapor and claim the ninja magic therein.



On your way out, four more ninja seek to stop you. Slash and burn.



Head left at the end of the alley, then turn right and leap upward. Make your way around the bend, then mount the first destroyed building you come upon to your left.



From there, follow the path back and to the left straight into a secret!



With that talisman gathered, you are immediately accosted by more ninja; show the Hellspawn how to raise some.



That band of the hand destroyed, continue straight ahead toward the flaming barrier blocking the way. Three more ninja make your acquaintance; make them regret it.



With the barrier banished, head down the alley and straight into three ninja and two dogs. Lock on and remember your combo training: dash, strike, repeat!



As the alley opens up again, turn left and make your way down the left wall to collect some goodies and slay two ninja, then head over and dispatch the tank.



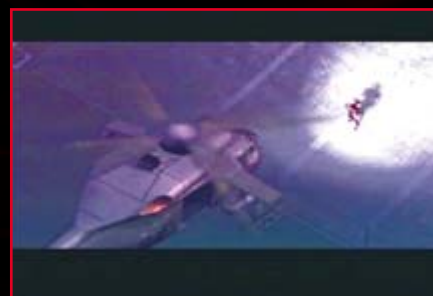
Tank and accompanying ninja out of commission, turn right and mount the nearby collapsed building. Head straight ahead, leap across the gap, then turn left to reach another secret talisman.



Head back over to where you destroyed the tank and head down the alley to deal with another mechanized monstrosity.

Helicopter From Hell

Not only has a demon plague been unleashed upon the denizens of Tokyo, but the demons also have access to all the latest high-tech military gear. This whirlybird is bent on Hotsuma's untimely death, so ready yourself.



You battle against a military helicopter that's armed to the teeth with machine guns and missiles. It'll even ram you if you give it the chance.



If you're injured at any time during the fight, destroy the parked cars scattered about to receive a health pick-up.



While the machine guns and head-butt are bad, nothing will ruin your day faster than being hit with a missile or two. Thankfully, they're fairly slow-moving and easy to dodge.



Although he doesn't seem that tough, he has backup; periodically, four ninja appear onscreen. Deal with them, then get back to dismantling the helicopter.



This chopper's bark is worse than its bite; keep it in your sights by using the lock-on, then dash, get underneath its soft underbelly, and jump up and deliver two quick hits. Repeat this procedure until it goes down in a geyser of fire.

Enter Ageha



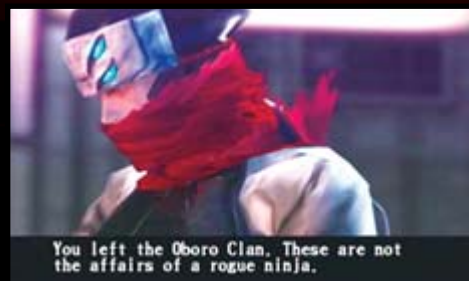
Mind the machine guns; if you're far enough back, he'll attempt to mow you down with both barrels.



Leadership suits you well.



Get too close, and he'll dip his nose and fly right into your chest—ow!



You left the Oboro Clan. These are not the affairs of a rogue ninja.

Just as you deliver the final, killing blow, Ageha rockets onto the scene and delivers a shuriken to the windshield of the helicopter, decisively ending the fray. Hotsuma is none too pleased to see her, however, and heads off to the next stage while making it painfully clear what he thinks of her.

Stage 1B

A Tale of Two Brothers



As Hotsuma enters the second stage, he reminisces on perhaps the most painful event of his life: the death of his brother Moritsune. Fueled by fire, his quest continues.



As you enter the stage, head straight, then turn left as you exit the alley. Mount the wall to your left and run out to the ninja magic.



Upon claiming the ninja magic, a lone, brave (foolish?) ninja arrives. Bring the blade down.



Turn toward the barriers across the way. Double jump out into space, then dash to bridge the gap.



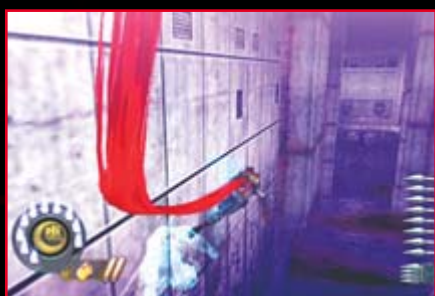
After you land, a winged Hellspawn greets you. Lock on, leap into the air, dash, and slash.



Turn left and make your way across the next gap. Three ninja lay in wait; fell the middle one at the back first, then turn on the other two.



Turn left once more and make your way to the floating stone structure. Cut it from the sky to negate the nearby barrier.



Passing beyond the barrier, mount the right wall and head forward, leap-dashing from wall to wall till you reach the health pick-up at the far side.



Continue down the alley as it snakes right and left, and you come across a wall-crawling Hellspawn. Leap-dash and cut her down.



The alley opens to a windy rooftop. Four ninja have been waiting here for you. Don't disappoint them. Note the talisman across the rooftops.



Jog over and claim the nearby shuriken, then turn your attentions across the large gap nearby.

Tip



You can approach this gap any number of ways, but the best is simply to double jump forward, then dash at the last moment to safely make your way across.



Once you're across, another winged Hellspawn materializes. Make your way over and de-wing him.



Just behind the Hellspawn, notice a shuriken. Mount the wall to claim it, then follow the wall as it winds its way left to the talisman you noted earlier.



Make your way back to where you vanquished the Hellspawn, then head around the corner and to the left, over the gap, to destroy the waiting stone column.



Once beyond the barrier, mount the wall and make your way from wall to wall to avoid the black vapors below. A few turns later, you'll be out into the open once more.



Immediately upon exiting the alley, turn right and note the talisman on the ridge just above.



Clamber up the wall to your right, going as high as you can, then make your way forward until you run out of smooth surface; if you go too far, it's a long way down.



Follow that up with a double-jump toward the talisman with a dash at the end for good measure.



Backtrack with a double-jump/dash combo, turn right, and head across the next gap where a lone ninja waits.

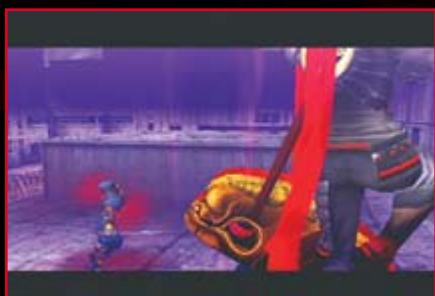
Stage 1B A Tale of Two Brothers



Continue forward across the next gap into the waiting arms of three ninja. Abuse them at your leisure, then clamber up the rise to the right.



Spy the health pick-up in the distance, then double jump and dash across the gap to claim it.



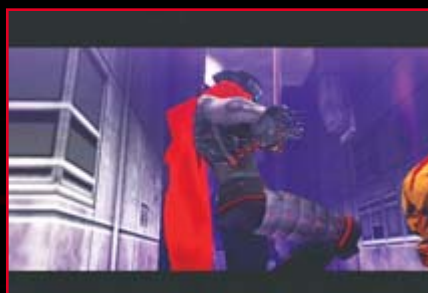
Once you land and claim the health, three ninja and a winged Hellspawn crash the party.



Dispatch the ninja first. Deal with the Hellspawn after you've excused the rest of the guests from the party.



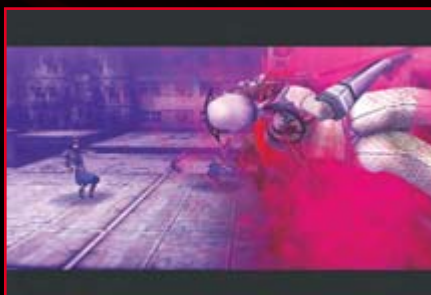
Leap forward and shatter the floating column to open the barrier to the left.



As you head past the barrier and down the alley, four Hellspawn appear. Use the jump/dash to combo them into little pieces.



As the alley opens once more, leap the gap and claim the shuriken standing before you, then head forward over the gap to deal with five more ninja and two Hellspawn in two separate waves.



Over the next gap you come across a few health pick-ups and ninja waiting to ambush. Four Ninja and one wall crawler assault you first, followed shortly by four more ninja.



Now follow the wall as it heads right, slay another wall crawler, then shatter the floating statue rotating rapidly nearby.



Column down and barrier smashed, mount the wall to the right of the column and head out to the ninja magic waiting tantalizingly nearby.



When you claim the magic, two ninja and a winged Hellspawn arrive to deter you. Cut down the ninja and throw a shuriken at the critter to send him back to Hell.



Stage 1B A Tale of Two Brothers



Make your way past the barrier you shattered a moment ago, and you come across two ninja and two Hellspawn. Sheath your blade in their innards, then keep moving.



As the alley opens once more, turn left and follow the wall across the various gaps, and through two ninja and a Hellspawn. For the largest gap, wall run across.



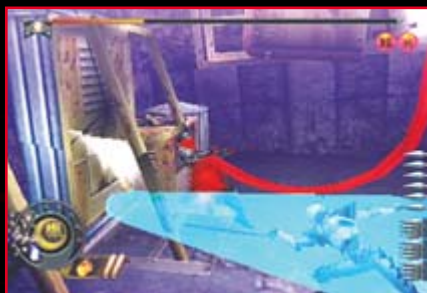
Once you reach the opposite corner, another Hellspawn menaces you from the right, across another gap. Deal with the nearby ninja, then jump, lock on, and dash across the gap to deal harshly with the fire-tossing fiend.



Now make your way to the dual floating columns, smash both, and continue forward through the now barrier-free alley and straight into a mysterious foe.

Man of Mystery

This mysterious and very deadly swordsman is your toughest foe so far. Who is he? What does he want? And why can't Hotsuma shake the nagging feeling that he knows him?



This fella is deadly with a capital D: if you become caught in his sword swings, leap or dodge immediately to avoid the bulk of his blows.

Kill the swordsman



You can deal with him a number of ways, but the easiest involves walking to the edge and facing the swordsman. Just as he winds up to strike, leap or dash out of the way, and he'll dive right off the edge into empty space. This will deal a lot of damage, but it is the slowest way to deal with him.



If you decide to use the frontal assault method, use your kick often to put him off-guard, because he continuously blocks. Once you've dropped his guard, *immediately* start slashing at this exposed body. If you're not close enough, you'll hit him once and he'll come back at you with naked fury.



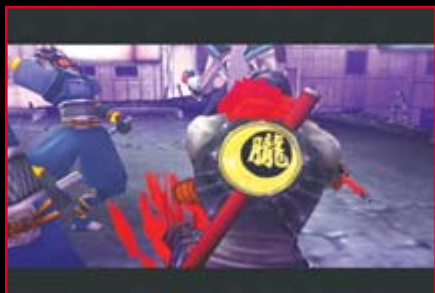
The surest way to hurt him is to let him approach, and in the first split second of his swing, lock on and dash to the left or right (which will bring you around his flank). As you dash around, immediately begin taking chunks out of him.



Like the helicopter before, the swordsman has backup in the form of four ninja at a time. If he summons them, deal with them *first*. He will take advantage of the confusion to destroy you, so watch your back.



The more ninja you manage to combo, the more health they'll leave behind. Also, if you're feeling beat, the containers scattered around the corners of the building contain health pick-ups.



Of course, the successful strategy combines all of these tactics to keep him off-guard. If you're near a ledge, let him fall off. Backed him into a corner? Let loose with a kick, then slash him mercilessly. If he's out in the open, dash and slash. Combine all of these, and he'll be a bloody stump in no time.

Akujiki Awakens



Akujiki has tasted my blood... drank of my soul... and has finally awakened.

As the battle with the mysterious stranger concludes, Akujiki is awakened by the taste of his blood. Though Hotsuma does not learn the name of this enigmatic assailant, Akujiki is now primed and ready, and the forces of Hellspawn will fall like so much wheat before the executioner's scythe.

Stage 1B A Tale of Two Brothers



Stage 2A

Pressing Onward



Akujiki has consumed the Yin of men since ancient times.



If left unfed, Akujiki will eat away at its wielder's soul.

With that mysterious foe dispatched (for the time being), Ageha explains to Hotsuma that although Akujiki is a mighty weapon, it will seek to destroy him if he fails to satisfy its unholy thirst for blood—a craving that knows no bounds in this world.

Blinded to the perils in his quest for vengeance, Hotsuma curtly leaves Ageha to launch further assaults against the evil forces unleashed on the land.



Head straight ahead and dispatch the four ninja who materialize before Hotsuma.



As you pass through the barrier, you stumble across three more ninja; stab and skewer at will.



Make your way down the left corridor to collect the shuriken. After you snag those, four dogs appear to menace Hotsuma.



Dogs dealt with, head out of the dead end and journey left. As you make your way to the flaming barrier, cut down three more ninja.

Tengu



These large, menacing Hellspawn are best dispatched by attacking them from behind by dashing *around* or *over* them. Beware their ground stomp, which sends out a devastating shock wave, and their staff swing, which could take the head off a lesser ninja.



Barrier down, head forward to the fenced-in area and strike with a heart of fury at the Tengu Hellspawn as he drops from the sky. Jump above and dash behind him to strike like the snake.



Move forward to encounter two ninja and two more dogs. Slay them with the speed borne of the Oboro clan.



No sooner do you deal harshly with those miscreants than two more dogs swiftly appear. Finish them to dispel the barrier just ahead.



Beyond the barrier lay some shuriken. Gather them and prepare for an assault from the four corners by four ninja.



With those ninja mulched, turn around and peer up at the last arch you passed through; there's ninja magic up there! Double jump-dash to claim it.



Magic in hand, press forward to the next area, where you're forced to deal with three ninja and two dogs.



As you proceed a few steps farther, two more dogs rise to challenge you. Slay them quickly.



Continue forward a few more steps and confront a Tengu and one more set of dogs.



With that small army dispatched, make your way up the low rises to the left, turn back toward the last arch you passed through, and you'll see a secret talisman: double jump-dash to claim it.



Talisman in hand, head for the health pick-up just down the road, but beware the three ninja seeking your end!

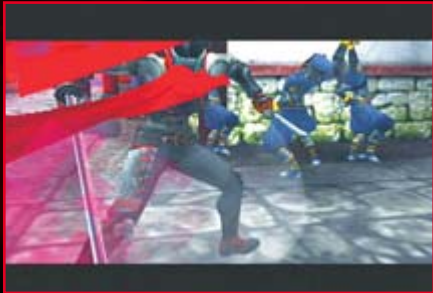


Continue beyond the barrier. As you reach an intersection with paths heading straight and right, four ninja spring!

Stage 2A *Pressing Onward*



Head down the path to a dead end and claim the shuriken housed within the red box.



As you go in to grab the shuriken, four ninja filed in behind you. Deal with them as you deal with all their kind.



Making your way back to the main road, you'll be accosted by yet another four-pack of ninja. Unsheathe your sword and lay waste to them.



Passing beyond the next barrier as it melts away, Hotsuma will be assaulted by five undead ninja of his clan; give them the peace they deserve.



Head across the gap to the shuriken awaiting your nimble fingers.



Continue forward toward the flaming barrier and, as you land from your leap, four ninja and a Tengu try to stop your progress. Show them the error of their ways.



Continue on to another fenced area and an ambush by four ninja who clearly don't know what they're dealing with.



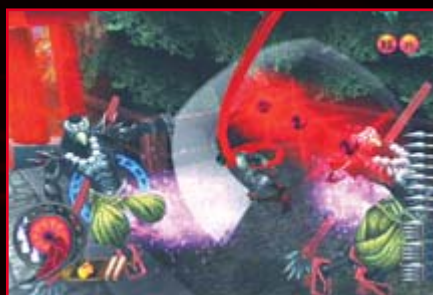
Beyond the next barrier, a ninja magic scroll is locked away in a red box. Free it.



Continue forward for a battle royale; four dogs and two Tengu materialize!



First things first: Dispatch the four dogs *before* tackling the Tengu. With the dogs felled, Akujiki should be juiced...

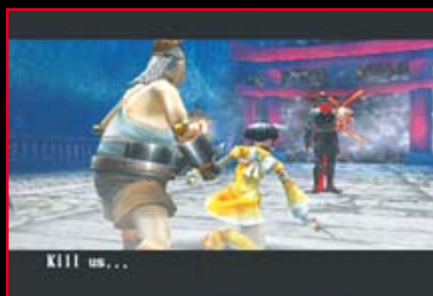


...which will make taking down the giants *much* simpler and less harmful to Hotsuma's health.



Remember that you do have ninja magic at your disposal. If you're about to die and there's no other way out, hit [L1] to bludgeon foes into submission.

"Kill Us..."



Former members of the Oboro clan, Shirogane and Akagane, are brought back to unholy life to menace Hotsuma. However, they do have some slim control of their minds and beg Hotsuma for their freedom—via the blade.



By this point you should have a large number of shuriken, which make this a fairly simple task. As Akagane approaches (deal with her first), fling a shuriken to stun her, then move in and strike. Be sure to get in close before you strike, or you won't land every blow.



Akagane has a nasty sting that will hurt badly if you allow her to land a blow or combination.



As she dashes around, wait for her to end a jaunt before striking with a shuriken; this way, you won't waste them trying to hit a ghost.



When the dogs materialize (in sets of four), drop everything and slay them. Then, with Akujiki swelled with blood, cut Akagane down.



Akagane freed from her cursed existence, turn your attention to Shirogane. He's much slower and easier to hit than Akagane, so repeat the same process of shuriken followed by slashes.



If you run out of shuriken, beware Shirogane's swinging chain; it'll stun you and open you up for attack if it connects. However, you can time it so that you dash right through its protective arc.



When the dogs show up, power up and cut Shirogane free from his dire existence. Two fully powered-up blades will utterly destroy him.

Free at Last

With Shirogane and Akagane freed, Akujiki drinks deeply of their blood. With the sword satisfied, it's time to continue your quest for blood and vengeance.



Stage 2A Pressing Onward

Stage 2B

Pressing Onward II



As soon as you enter the stage, turn left and leap over the nearby wall.



Four Mokugiyos teleport in to flash-fry Hotsuma. Use a little combo action to take them apart, then smash the nearby boxes for some shuriken and magic.



Head back over the wall, where you run into two ninja. Cut them down with brutal efficiency.



After that bit of ugliness, head left to another red box and more shuriken.



As you claim the throwing knives, three ninja teleport in to waylay Hotsuma. Take them down.



Venture forward toward the barrier, and smash the rotating column.



Here, you are accosted by four Mokugiyō as you enter the fenced area. Unleash the Art of the Combo on them.



Continue moving forward toward the building in the distance. As you near it, head left around the back. When you come to the wall, scale it and leap into the enclosed area below.

Note



After you eliminate the Tengu, smash the two nearby boxes.



Head back up the wall, but don't drop down! Leap from the top of the wall to the nearby roof.



From the left end of the roof, double jump and dash out toward the talisman floating in the air.



Once you're on the ground, turn around and strike down the floating column just behind Hotsuma.

Stage 2B Pressing Onward II



Move forward and take the left passage to shatter another floating column and the next red box. As you gather the goodies, a Tengu drops in behind you. Show him the Art of the Sword.



Make your way toward the nearby barrier and shatter the floating column standing watch.



Making your way through the barrier, past the first fenced area, you come across three Mokugiyo and two ninja. It's the end of the road for them.



Those foes vanquished, move along to the three floating columns to demonstrate your skill in sculpture.



Head to the right to deal with two Mokugiyo and two ninja.



Head to the left and smash the two floating columns down the pathway.



Turn around and head down the narrow pathway to the left. At the end of that one, turn left to hit another floating column.

Stage 2B Pressing Onward II



With that column rocked, turn around and head toward one more floating up in the sky. Double jump and dash to reach it, then get ready for a fight.



As you drop from the shattered column, you must tackle three ninja and a Tengu. Power up your sword on a ninja or three, *then* chop up the Tengu.



Make your way past the barrier to the fenced area to add another set of shuriken to your growing collection.



Continue to the left, toward the next fenced area, to take out three Mokugiyos and one Tengu.



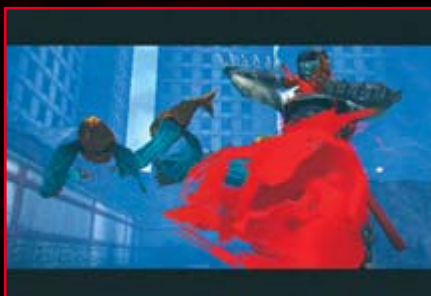
Hang another left to spy three floating columns. Carve yourself a masterpiece.



Follow the path as it bends away from the barrier, and you run into three ninjas and two Mokugiyos. Combo them into submission.



As you continue forward to nail the nearby column, three Mokugiyō materialize to stop you. Test your new sculpting ability on their flesh.



Three Mokugiyō appear with three ninja bringing up the rear. Cut them down in a flurry of blood and steel.



With that small legion dispatched, tag the stone column rotating just above the battlefield.



Leap atop the nearby mesa and smash the column rotating above it.



Drop down and leap out to the nearby island to tag the next column.

Note



There's health pick-up located up above. Double jump forward to reach it (if you need it).



Make your way out to the other island, to the right and farther out from the first, by using a double jump-dash combo.



From here, point Hotsuma toward the nearby wall, then launch at it. Once you're attached, start running to the far corner and follow the wall as it turns the bend.



As you make your way along the second part of the wall, watch for the land mass to the left. With it in range, leap out to it (double jump-dash) to claim the ninja magic!



Using the even higher mesa nearby, head back to solid ground, then make your way forward, back to where you initially left the ground, and head down the pathway.



Make your way to the next fenced area to contend with two Mokugiyō, two ninja, and five Tengu. Take out the Mokugiyō and ninja first, then smoke the Tengu with your supercharged blade.



With that pack of foes decapitated, turn around. Atop the nearby arch lays a shuriken.

Stage 2B Pressing Onward II



Follow the path as it leads to another barrier. Here you face two Mokugiyo flanked by *three* Tengu.

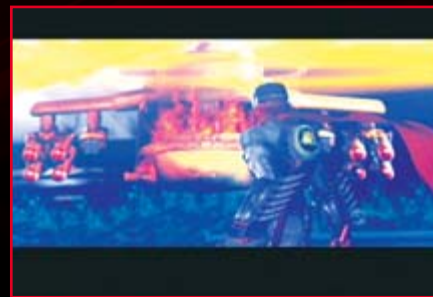


Take down the Mokugiyo first, then move on to the slow-moving Tengu.

Dishonorable Helicopter



One of the elder members of Hotsuma's clan, Kabushi, is being tended by Ageha when an attack helicopter shows up to kill them both. Hotsuma arrives to foil this dishonorable attack.



Deal with this whirlybird of doom in *exactly* the same manner as you dealt with the first.



Slash its exposed underbelly to slowly whittle it down, but mind its enhanced homing missiles!



A band of ninja show up periodically; slay them to boost Akujiki's bloodlust and make short work of the chopper.



Stage 3A

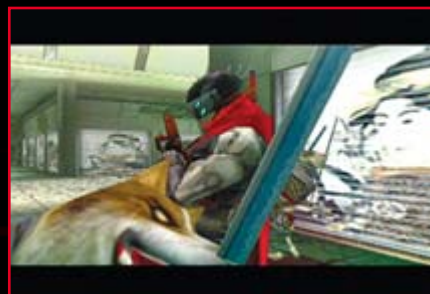
The Unquenchable Thirst

Stage 3A

The Unquenchable Thirst



Consumed by an even greater thirst for vengeance—matched only by Akuji's desire for blood—Hotsuma continues his quest within the confines of a half-destroyed subway.



Immediately upon entering the building, Hotsuma is set upon by a pack of sword-wielding dogs! These dogs are invulnerable to frontal attack, so lock on and attack from the back or side.



The first pack vanquished, four more rise to take their place. Remember to lock on to one and then work your way to each individually.

Tip

If you find yourself surrounded by hounds, remember that you have a kick; this will give you enough breathing room to determine your next move.



With both packs down, head forward to claim a set of shuriken laying nearby.



Once you've claimed the shuriken, head to the opposite corner to score some ninja magic.



After you've bagged the scroll, head forward toward the barrier, to deal with four ninja.



Make your way past the barrier, then drop down to the next floor. Follow the hallway until the room opens up to three ninja and a dog.



Another ninja and two more dogs rise to take their place. Show them the error of their ways.



Head over to the metal sheets and slash through them to find a health pick-up.



Continue forward and head down the hallway leading to the left. You find a pair of ninja and their dog patiently waiting for you.

Stage 3A

The Unquenchable Thirst



After that spot of carnage, make your way up the two giant steps, then turn around and head toward the barrier. On the way there, a pair each of ninja and dogs arrives.



The barrier dispelled, continue forward. As you exit the hallway, turn immediately left and mount the wall. Make your way across it to the shuriken just a double jump-dash away.



Now note the talisman just across the way; a quick double jump gets you there, though you may want to tack on a dash just to be safe.



Mount the wall to your left and head around the corner until you spy the shuriken a quick double jump away.



Run along the wall a bit farther, then drop in on the health pick-up a little way below.



Drop down still another step to see another health pick-up and a ninja magic scroll in the distance. Grab the health, then double jump-dash to snag the magic.





Magic in hand, drop to the floor below and prepare for an epic battle: two dogs and four ninja hell-bent on your death. Make some room between Hotsuma and them, then start picking them off.



No sooner do you dispatch that crew than three more dogs and three more ninja show up. Repeat the process to emerge (relatively) unscathed.



With all of that bloodiness out of the way, head to the back corner of the ruined area and claim the large health pick-up; you probably need it.



Make your way down the open hallway and confront two more dogs. After the last two fights, this should be a cakewalk.



Dogs done in, head up the next two large steps in your path, then turn around and leap the gap to deal with four ninja.



From there, head up two more large steps (mind the black poison spewing from the wall), then head over the next gap and past still more of the noxious black spew.

Stage 3A

The Unguenchable Thirst



Just beyond the second cloud, you happen upon four more ninja. Slice and dice.



After dispatching that band of rank amateurs, head to the opposite corner, past a black cloud, to claim two sets of shuriken.



Mount the left wall and make your way forward, past all the gas traps. Watch your step, though; some of them hit rather high on the wall.



Drop down from the wall and down to the level below, then make your way to the next large room, where you find four dogs and a ninja.



Once you've dealt with them, three more ninja and two dogs appear. Chew them up and spit them out.



Where does it end? Five more ninja appear to take a tiring Hotsuma down. Show them what it means to be of the Oboro clan!



What? More ninja? Yes! One more group of four shows up to test your mettle. Are you worthy?

Tip

Within one of the steel sheets lays a cloud of noxious black vapor: if you're in trouble, hide behind that and let it take its toll on the enemy.



With the bodies piled high, shatter the steel sheets to get some shuriken and a health pick-up.



Make your way down the corridor leading left to another large room. Go down the right side and shatter the steel sheets to claim another talisman.



Once you claim the secret, five ninja strike with fury. Return in kind.



Truck down the vapor-choked corridor heading right. Note that a tank awaits Hotsuma at the end!



Wall run to drop onto the tank swiftly and, without mercy, begin carving it into steel filings.



Drop down and make your way past noxious vapor once again.



Once you clear the vapor, drop down and head into the terminus of the subway. You come across three ninja and another tank. Take out the three ninja, then annihilate the tank.



After you launch your assault on the tank, four more ninja appear nearby. Hack up the tank, then teach them a thing or two about ambush.



Another four arise to take their place. Once more, insert your boot in their collective face.



Finally, one last trio of ninja makes a last-ditch attempt to silence Akujiki. Too bad they'll be doing it with their blood.

Crazy Old Man



Hotsuma once more is forced to deal permanently with another member of the Oboro clan: Hakuraku.

Tip



First things first: Quickly slaughter the three dogs standing before Hakuraku. You should have just enough time to get behind them as the battle starts.



With Akujiki powered up, lay into Hakuraku full force. If you can manage to slay four dogs, *one* hit will kill Hakuraku.



Otherwise, you must chase him around the area until you can deliver enough blows to slay him. For the most part, Hakuraku is of little concern; it's the dogs that can kill you in five seconds flat, so *always* deal with them before going after Hakuraku.

Another Good Man...Dead

Freed from his curse, Hakuraku's essence is absorbed into Akujiki, bolstering Hotsuma's power even more.

Your death will not go unavenged, old man.

Stage 3A

The Unquenchable Thirst

Stage 3B

The Unquenchable Thirst II



For starters, run forward—mind the sticky webs—and peer over at the opposite wall, just to the right. Go get that shuriken!

Tip

This stage is covered with spider webs. If you become snagged in one, dash out of it to gain your freedom rapidly, especially when hungry spiders are nearby.



Head toward the ground to take out three spiders that pop up as you move in to shatter the nearby columns. Don't worry; they die easily.



Smash the two nearby columns to remove the barrier.



Proceed down the long corridor, previously protected by the barrier, and you run into a spider and a wall crawler. Chop 'em up.



Take a right turn and head toward the egg sack. Before you can deal with that, though, you must kill the spiders and a lone ninja.



Head to the left to grab the health pick-up.



Make your way directly across the hall to score a ninja magic scroll in the next alcove over.



From the scroll, head to the left, and down the second passage to the right, to find more spiders and another egg sack; squash those, too.



Backtrack a bit, take a right, and head down the last corridor on the right. Make your way to an open room with a shuriken and health pick-up.



Now return to where you smashed the last egg sack and follow that corridor as it slopes upward.



Once you reach the overlook at the top, double jump and dash to the wall to the right, then make your way past the next ledge along the way.



Continue along the wall until you reach an impasse. From here, double jump forward and finish it up with a dash to reach the outcrop just ahead.



Now you face a downward slope, but instead of going down, leap to the wall on the right and make your way around the corner to a secret talisman!



From the talisman, turn around and line up the floating column at the other end of the room. Let fly with a shuriken to take it down.



With the talisman in your fevered grip, leap forward off the ledge and clear the webs below. From there, render the spiders down to their component parts.



Turn around and use a well-placed shuriken to take out the column underneath the ledge.



Continue Hotsuma's journey into the bowels of the earth. When you reach level ground, take a left to deal with four creepy spiders.



Continue forward from there and take the second right, down a passageway into more spiders, a wall crawler, and a floating column. Take them all apart.



After that bit of surgery, backtrack to the previous hallway, make a right, and nail the floating column in the alcove to the left.



Turn around and head straight ahead through a small cluster of spiders, a ninja, and two wall crawlers, chopping as you go.

Stage 3B The Unquenchable Thirst II



Continue moving straight ahead to tag another floating column.



Return to the main hall, take a left, then take the first left to grab a health pick-up.



Once more, make your way left down the main corridor toward the egg sack at the far end. Dispatch the spiders and the wall crawlers that get between you and it.



Egg sack scrambled, take a quick turn right and nab the next floating column and the wall crawler lurking just behind it.



Head back to the main corridor, take the first two rights, and follow the path as it slopes upward. Two sets of three ninja apiece will attempt to stop you.



As you enter the next open room, take out the four spiders that move to intercept you, then immediately jump up to the right to nail the nearby egg sack.



Make your way across the nearby gap opposite the barrier, then mount the right wall and run to the next ledge.



Duck right into the alcove to get another floating column, then look across the room to another. Hit that one with shuriken.



Optionally, now, you can drop to the floor below and massacre the small army of spiders and egg sacks. Your reward? A ninja magic scroll beneath the ledge!



Make your way up the crumbling stairs formally cut off by a barrier and get ready for a creature straight from your nightmares.



Up until this point, the bosses have been fairly tame: human characters or the occasional attack helicopter. Not this time! You must now go toe-to-toe with a giant spider—a spider that happens to have the head of a tiger and speaks in an unfriendly manner! The Stiger!



Run right up to his face, double jump, and strike its abdomen. Once you hit it, drop to the floor, and it'll try to strike you with two of its legs: double jump the second it begins the first swing, and you'll be free of the swing. Repeat the process.



If you're being mauled by the Stiger, destroy the egg sacks to receive some health, but only do this if *absolutely* necessary.



When the egg sacks start popping out spiders, kill all of them (if you can), then stab the Stiger with your juiced blade in the same manner as before. You may be able to get in two hits, before...



...it backs up the wall, placing itself out of harm's way. Once it does this, mount the small strip of wall along either side of the room, dash toward the Stiger, leap, lock on, and stab it in midair.



Tip

Remember that the spiders are there to power up Akujiki, so use them for this. If you see or hear some running around below, drop and kill them, then attack the Stiger again.



The Stiger has two other attacks: it will attempt to impale you while you're running on the wall, and it may also attempt to spit acid at you. However, if you can keep the heat up, it will *never* get the chance.

Stage 3B The Unquenchable Thirst II

Stage 4A

Burning Town

The hellish subway behind, Hotsuma makes his way to a section of Tokyo that must be Heaven for these Hellspawn beasts: they've burned an entire town to its very foundation to make it more appealing to their kind. This is not something Hotsuma is going to take coolly and calmly.

Hey Baby



This level introduces the Beni-Baby to Hotsuma's rogues gallery. Small, moth-like Hellspawn with human faces, they're more nuisance than actual threat. In large numbers, however, they can be formidable. And they spit fire. Two slashes of Akujiki at base power levels will bring one down.


Stage 4-A

Burning Town

51



After dealing quickly with them, you face a lake of molten fire. If you double jump and dash to the right, you'll score another talisman.


 A screenshot from a game showing a dark, industrial environment. In the foreground, there's a dark, reflective surface, possibly water or a pool of lava. In the background, there's a large, glowing orange and yellow structure that looks like a furnace or a large fire. To the right, there's a platform with a red and white striped pole and a small, glowing orange object, which is the talisman mentioned in the text. The overall atmosphere is dark and fiery.

Make your way back to the lake, then double jump and dash *forward* across the lake this time. As you press on, two red ninja and three Beni-Babies try to make Hotsuma's life difficult.

Make your way back to the lake, then double jump and dash *forward* across the lake this time. As you press on, two red ninja and three Beni-Babies try to make Hotsuma's life difficult.



With those five souls now housed within the sword's infernal blade, take the pathway heading right, then left into four more babies and a tank. Tag the babies first, then house the tank with a powered-up Akujiki.



Continue to follow the path as it twists, and you soon stumble across three more Beni-Babies and two red ninja who won't be happy to see Hotsuma. Show them why.

Tip

As you careen through this stage, you run across numerous lanterns at various intersections. Destroy every one; each contains anything as lowly as a set of shuriken up to and including ninja magic!



Continue pressing forward, and you run into another Beni-Baby/red ninja family. Do your best to keep the family together—in death.



As the road takes you, move on until you reach a fork with three paths: In front of you lay four Beni-Babies, to the right path, another baby and a tank—make flesh and metal one.



Once you annihilate that bunch, five more babies materialize directly overhead. Add them to the body count.



After the barrier by the tank dissolves, continue forward, then follow the path to the left to find a second talisman.



Continue to follow the path as it moves forward, and you come upon a three-pack of Beni-Babies. Deal with them and keep moving.

Stage 4A Burning Town



After satisfying Akujiki's thirst (momentarily), continue around the bend and take the first right *if* you need health and *if* you're skilled enough to take down two sets of three red ninja and two Beni-Babies in close quarters.



Now head right out of the alleyway and, once again, you are accosted by the Swiss Family Stage 4A: three red ninja and two Beni-Babies.



After the barrier falls, move on till you come across a band of red ninja—four to be precise. Show them that Akujiki likes red.



As you enter the next open room, take out the four spiders that move to intercept you, then immediately jump up to the right to nail the nearby egg sack.



Pressing forward, you come upon a broad avenue to the left with a tank at the far end. Head down the boulevard, dodging shells as you go, and use the airborne babies as a living bridge across the lava lake to reach and destroy the tank.



After scrapping the tank, four more babies teleport in behind Hotsuma. Make them rethink their guerilla tactics.



Once again pressing on, follow the path until you come across four more Beni-Babies. Clip their wings.



Follow the road until you reach a very large open area featuring two tanks and five Beni-Babies over a lake of fire. Once again, use the babies as a bridge to reach the tanks. By the time you hit the first tank, Akujiki should be ready to split atoms.



With the tanks headed to the scrap metal yard, yet more Beni-Babies beam in. Slay them to add the entire species to the endangered Hellspawn list.

"My Fire Shall Consume You!"



Once again Hotsuma must face down a former member of the Oboro clan, now under demonic sway. However, unlike some of the others, Homura seems to be enjoying his role a bit too much for anyone's liking.



With Homura, the operative word is patience; although he can be one of the toughest bosses of the game, defeating him can be very simple if you follow some basic rules.

Stage 4-A Burning Town



For starters, *never* attempt to hit him more than twice in any given attack; if you miss the third strike, chances are that he'll teleport away in a ball of fire. Make a note: *ninja and fire don't mix*.



Use the super zakos floating around the stage (the fire-spitting heads) to power up Akujiki. Two fully powered strokes of your sword will finish Homura.



Most of Homura's attacks are devastating with a capital "D". If you're hurting, use the zakos and lanterns scattered about to acquire health.

Tip



If you take it slowly, he will still die. There is *no* rush unless you're going for a quick time to apply toward your ranking.



It also never hurts to stun Homura with shuriken prior to going for the jugular: Doing this guarantees two safe hits without retribution (be sure you're going to get the third before going for it).



It can be tricky reaching Homura, because he meanders all over the area. Press the attack only if you know you have time before he once again teleports away. There is nothing worse than going in for the killing blow only to have him teleport and destroy Hotsuma in the process.

Flame Off!

After a grueling, superheated battle, Homura falls (as all must before the might of Akujiki). Even in defeat, Homura is indignant, but it matters not; his essence will also become one with your sword.



Stage 4B

Burning Town II



As the stage starts, immediately turn around and pick out the talisman located directly in Hotsuma's field of view. Move forward and drop to the ledge below, then jump out, grab the talisman, and dash back to the ledge. Grab the ninja magic scroll right there on the ledge, too.



Head toward the barrier and smash the two columns silently standing watch over it.



Beyond the barrier, you come across three Beni-Babies (the first of many). Strike them from the air like lightning.



As Hotsuma continues onward, he comes across a band of red ninja. Slash with the fury of the righteous.



As the road opens into a larger cavern, note the tank and Beni-Babies flanking in the distance. Leap to the nearest platform and make your way over to the floating column just to the right.



Make your way back to the previous platform, then forward to the platform floating on a sea of molten rock below to snag some shuriken.

Note

The various pits Hotsuma falls into will hurt him but will not kill him (unless, of course, he waits for it to do him in), so don't panic if you miss a jump or part of a combo. Calmly find a low ledge and get back to it.



Launch Hotsuma at the babies just above. Take them down quickly, then turn your attention to the precariously perched tank after Akujiki has been suitably enhanced.



Tank and babies pushin' up daisies, turn your attention to the floating column to the left of the barrier. Shatter it with a long-range shuriken.



Turn to the right of the barrier and leap down to the platform with the floating column, then get up to the nearby platform and through the dispelled barrier.



Make your way to the next open area and leap to the ledge running along the left wall to deal with five unruly babies.



A second set of five shows up to test (or is it press?) their luck.



Make your way up to the column rotating solemnly on the nearby mesa—wreck it.



Pick your way toward the second column, to the right of the barrier, and smash it.



Immediately turn around. Just out of sight lays another talisman. Use the Right Analog Stick to verify where it is, then double jump and dash to claim it.



Head through the next passage until you come across two babies and two red ninja. Hack and slash, then continue on your merry way.



As the corridor opens up once more, make your way to the right and across the gap toward some shurikens. Once there, you are waylaid by two babies and three red ninja. Teach them that it's not nice to scare people.



Shuriken in hand, head toward the nearest floating column via a platform on the lava below, then follow the narrow ridge around a corner to another talisman.



From the talisman, make your way upward toward the nearby shuriken. After you climb that ledge, you are jumped by three red ninja and two Beni-Babies, so watch out!



Turn around and line up the two columns floating in the distance. Jump and fire shuriken at each to take them out.



Now turn around and get the final column and a health pick-up for all your effort. Doing this dispels the nearby barrier, so get a move on.



As you enter the next passageway, you are antagonized by four more red ninja. Show them that you don't have time for games.



As you enter a larger cavern, spy the ninja magic floating above the ridge to the left. Double jump and dash back to the ledge to claim it safely.



After you snag the magic, three red ninja and two Beni-Babies show up to try to convince you to give it back. They won't succeed.



Continue along the left ridge and make your way atop the mesa with shuriken atop it. From this lofty vantage point, you can tag the nearest stone column with a shuriken, so get to it.



As you move forward to hammer the remainder of the columns, *nine* Beni-Babies show up. This is a true test: If you can obliterate all nine in one combo, you've arrived.



Strike down the two nearby columns with your blade, then mount the high ridge in the corner, jump, and throw shuriken at the final column.



Head down the next corridor, which opens into a very large room with numerous columns, a tank and, initially, five Beni-Babies.



First things first: Jump and shuriken the rightmost column. Watch for incoming fireballs from the babies.



Now, to make things *much* easier, start targeting the babies floating in the distance and poke them out of the sky with your shuriken. Cheap? Yep. Easy? Yep.



With the babies swimming in molten hot lava, shuriken the next column to the left.



Turn your attention to the column floating high and all the way to the left. Leap to the moving platform (watch for incoming shells), then double jump, slash the column, and dash toward the platform waiting below.



Now for the tank. From the platform below, head up to the ridge near the barrier. From here, a group of babies appears to the left. Use them as a bridge to power up Akujiki and to launch a blistering assault on the tank. Goodbye heavy artillery.



With the barrier dispelled, head down the corridor for one last battle with three red ninja and three Beni-Babies. After that last episode, this should be child's play. Then head through the barrier.

Like a Moth to the Flame



Once Hotsuma finally makes his way through the superhot caverns, he finds himself in a volcano, face-to-face with a creature straight out of a nightmare. This mothlike woman, Benisuzume, has a hostage that you must liberate, so unsheathe your sword, mighty warrior; it's time to burn this moth with the flame of Akujiki.

Stage 4B

Burning Town II



The battle starts with Hotsuma situated high on a mesa in the middle of a large cavern with Benisuzume hovering around the edges.



Note that you can reach her to strike with a double jump and dash combo. Start out keeping her locked on as she flies around you and hurls various fire attacks your way. Sidestep each of these.



Shortly, she summons six Beni-Babies, which surround Hotsuma on all sides. Begin your deadly dance to charge up Akujiki by using combos on as many as you feel comfortable with, then launch yourself at Benisuzume with the raging fury of a hurricane.



Each powered-up blow takes a serious chunk out of her life. After you connect, *immediately* dash to safety on the nearby wall. She detonates a fireball that will hurt very badly after you connect.



There's a good chance you'll end up in the lava a few times, but just get yourself out as calmly and rapidly as possible, then make your way back to the central mesa to repeat the combo process.



One final blistering swing, and she'll be finished. Gloat as the lava consumes her, then run like hell!



Stage 5A

Flooded City



Having rescued Kagari Ubusuna, whose duty it was to keep Hiruko sealed away, Hotsuma learns that Kagari has kept under his sway a demon powered by the earthquakes that have rocked Tokyo throughout the millennia. Kagari was to be a sacrifice to it, but not on Hotsuma's watch.

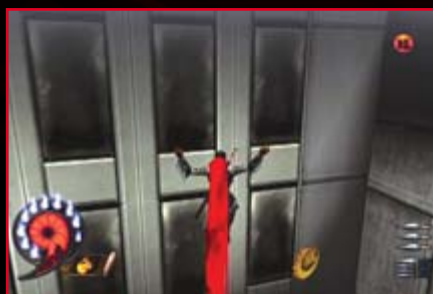


As the stage opens, head to the left corner of the rooftop and several Mokugiyo teleport in: combo all three in succession, then nail the stone column.



This is where things start to get tricky. First target and kill the wall crawler off to the left, then mount the wall. You'll be spending a lot of time on walls in this level and, if you fall, it's curtains for Hotsuma (see sidebar).

Keeping Your Boots Dry



Follow the sides of the building as you would on any other path in the game; it's just that you'll be on the walls instead of the ground. The safest way to maneuver is simply to jump then dash to the opposite side if necessary. This way, you always have a "spare" jump if things go badly.

Note

Always keep a wary eye on the rising water. At times it'll appear to be safe, but then the flood waters will rise and, unfortunately, Hotsuma can't breathe underwater.



Head forward and around the bend, hopping from wall to wall until you come upon another wall crawler. Stun her, then dispatch her.



Continue to the large cement slab just to the left of a barrier. From there, head left, ignoring the Mokugiyo nearby, and double jump and dash to the collapsed side of a building. Just to the left, spy the talisman.



After bagging the talisman, continue up the side of the building to slaughter two Mokugiyo and hit the nearby stone column.



After that, turn right and note the column across the way. Make your way over to it, but beware the rising tide!



Once you're across, take out two more Mokugiyo and shatter the column forcibly.



Once again turn right and make your way across the wall to the next stone column and a set of shuriken.



Finally, take one last right turn and move to grab the shuriken just a leap and dash away.



With the barrier dispelled, make your way back down to the concrete slab and head left down the corridor, following it as it twists right into two more Mokugiyo.



Now head down the next left and wait for the water to recede just below the shuriken. If you double jump and dash, you can snag the shuriken without going to ground.



Continue to the next slab of concrete and note the ninja magic just out of reach. Some simple wall crawling will net you that.



Magic in hand, make your way across the two collapsed buildings toward the stone column and two Mokugiyo and a winged ninja.



Column trashed, turn right and head past the half-submerged arch to Hotsuma's right. On the way, you are jumped by three Mokugiyo and a winged ninja. Have at them!



Those miscreants slain, turn right and make your way over to the next stone column and two more Mokugiyo.



Now turn left, mount the wall, and claim the shuriken just ahead.



Shuriken in hand, head to the left and the next stone column. Two more Mokugiyo pop in to harass you; harass them, instead.



Now mount the wall dead ahead and follow it as it twists to the right. You run across a wall crawler, so stun her with a shuriken and cut her loose.



Continue forward, take another right, then wait for the water to recede in the next open area and make a mad dash for higher ground and a shuriken.

Stage 5A Flooded City



Just beyond the shuriken, a column guarded by three Mokugiyos and a winged ninja awaits. Drop in for some combo action.



Now make your way to the center isle, dead center in the area, to take out a column and its four Mokugiyos escort in one fell swoop.



After taking out that group, two more Mokugiyos and two winged ninjas show up. Show them the same courtesy you showed the previous group.



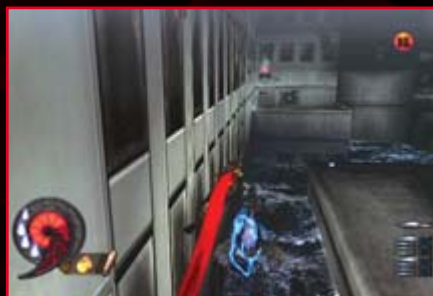
Now that you're one man alone on the island, sweep from left to right and use your shuriken to strike down the two remaining columns.



Now focus on the ninja magic dead ahead. Leap to the wall to your left and, from there, execute a double jump and dash towards the magic. Mind the rising water!



Magic in hand, climb the wall to your left and head forward. Around the next bend, you come across three Mokugiyo and a wall crawler. Be very careful!



With that party crashed, continue along the wall to the next open area. Take the wall on the left side and deal harshly with the Mokugiyo in your path.



Continue forward to the next column, where you are accosted by three winged ninja and a Mokugiyo. Wait for them to come to you, then attack with shuriken and sword when they get in close!



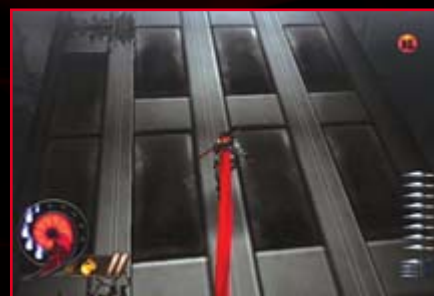
As you make your way to the next column in the corner to your left, land on the busted building that the Mokugiyo was floating above and inch your way to the upper edge of the building to discover another talisman.



Now hop over and swat the column from the sky and continue along the wall to a shuriken.



As you pass the barrier to your left, two Mokugiyo appear. Head over and extinguish their lives. Another is in the corner to your left with the column. Watch the rising water before attempting to get it.



With that last column smashed, head through the former barrier and prepare yourself.

"I Have Always Wanted to Fight You"



Kongou thinks he's a regular tough guy. Clearly, he thinks much of himself, but Hotsuma is about to change his outlook on life—what little there is left of it.



OK, Kongou *can* be tough, but if you use a few simple tricks, he'll go down hard. For starters, stay airborne for as much time as possible, and strike him only *after* he misses one of his electric kicks. If one of his kicks connects, you'll fly right off the stage.

Tip

As with every other boss stage, the containers littered about the area contain health, so cut them open if you're hurting.



Your best bet is to chip away at him as he misses each attack. Once the floating heads show up, power up Akujiki. It'll take, at most, two full-powered strokes to finish Kongou off.



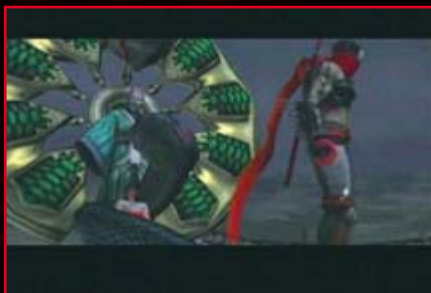
Stage 5A

Flooded City

Stage 5B

Flooded City II

After once again rescuing Kagari, she'll beg for Hotsuma to finish her off to prevent the reanimation of the dread demon Yatsurao. However, Hotsuma won't do it because, among other things, a giant snakelike creature just showed up.



Kurakuda looks menacing, but like all the bosses so far, he has several Achilles' heels that Hotsuma can exploit to the fullest.



For starters, every time he teleports in, jump and slash him in the front; this will prevent him from attacking (for the most part) and force him to teleport away. As with the other bosses, his movement generates lots of nasty, Hotsuma-hurting energy, so back off as he fades out.

Note

In theory, you could kill him with short, unpowered slashes, but Akujiki will have you for dinner if you choose to pursue him in this manner.



Also be wary of when he teleports in. If he beams in on top of you, Hotsuma will take massive damage, so always be aware of where he is.



After a few strokes to the head, let him unleash a gaggle of very unfriendly snakes—big snakes.



These snakes are the key to destroying him in record time. While they're fast and unruly, start locking on to them randomly and cutting them down. They move too quickly for any real strategy, so just keep swinging until you kill three or four, then take out Akujiki's rage on Kurakuda.



It won't take much more than three powered-up slices to kill him, but as the snakes are slithering about, he'll also try to vaporize you with a massive—with a capital "M"—energy beam. Steer clear of the beam while Akujiki reaps a bountiful harvest.

Caution



Akujiki also hurls balls of pure white energy that will not only slow you down, but will annihilate your life bar in very short order.



If he teleports to the roof, simply jump and dash to show him that nowhere is safe from Hotsuma's rage and the blazing thirst of Akujiki.

The Nakotomi Factory



He is trying to rebuild Yatsurao at the Nakotomi Factory!



Upon vanquishing Kurakuda, Ageha gives Hotsuma a lead that takes him to the Nakotomi factory, with which Hiruko has business ties.

Stage 6A

Nakotomi Factory

As Hotsuma makes his approach on the factory, all appears well. However, a ninja knows better than anyone that looks can be deceiving. What horrors lurk within its seemingly placid confines? Press onward, warrior.



As Hotsuma enters the factory, follow the corridor as it turns left. Hack up the Houdai (the floating cannon) as you vault over the bars. Repeat that process on the next two for a small combo.



Around the next corner, zip under the lasers, mount the wall, and chop down the Houdai and the two nearby wall crawlers. Once they're mulch, finish things up by hitting the last Houdai just beyond.



Proceed through the sliding doors, duck to the left, and nail the first Houdai. Next, leap off the platform and either lock on as you drop, or make your way down the wall to a pair of them. From there, there's one more on the opposite wall.



Mind the acid at the bottom of the shaft and continue through another doorway straight into some ninja magic.



There are two ways to make your way down the next shaft: the easy way via the lift, or the hard way via freefall combo action. If you go combo, lock on and dash to each new opponent as you see them while falling (three Houdai and two wall crawlers).



Passing through the next set of doorways, you'll meet the first club-wielding Oni along with four Houdai. Power up by using the first three Houdai running counterclockwise (start from the first one on the left), slash the Oni as you pass by him on the way to the final Houdai, then finish the Oni off with one last stab.



With those foes nullified, ride the lift downward, then board the next one underneath the platform you left to claim some shuriken.



Hop off the second lift as you pass four Houdai. Drop in and give them a little something by which to remember Hotsuma.

Stage 6A Nakotomi Factory



Board one of the platforms that formally housed a Houdai and ride that down until you see the string of soul essence. Leap out at it and fall to the lower platform.



Head through the next doorway and drop right onto a floating column. Take out the Houdai nearby while you're at it.



Fall to the next platform to repeat the last process: smash column, slash Houdai.



Once more for the road: fall down, smash column, take out two Houdai, then exit stage left.



Beyond the next doorway, take out the Houdai as you enter the room, then drop down to the ramp below for some shuriken.



Drop to the next ramp to shatter another column and total a few more Houdai.



One more drop, and you'll have to hit two columns on opposite sides of the ramp. Don't let that Houdai hovering nearby get away, either.



Beyond the next doorway, you come to a very large room filled with laser bars and seven Houdai. To make life easy, slash the Houdai directly in front of Hotsuma, then toss shuriken at the rest before proceeding forward to collect the goodies.



Head through the doorway at the far right corner to come immediately upon a rotating column. Jump, dash, slash, and jump once more to find purchase on the wall.



Another talisman lays to the upper right of the doorway you passed through.



As you proceed down this shaft, you come across three Houdai, a pair of wall crawlers, and two more columns mounted about midway down on opposite sides.

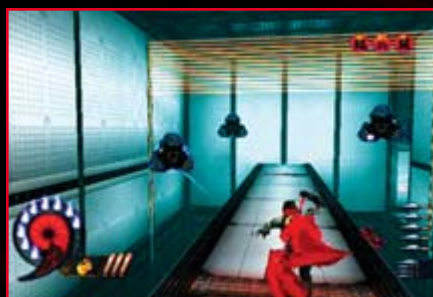
Note

If you need to feed Akujiki, carefully set up your combo; otherwise, hit the columns here and move out.





Make your way to another large room with laser bars, only this time there's an angry Oni waiting for you. Leap down to the lower half of the right wall, skirt under the bars, and combo the three Houdai. Then smash the Oni.



When you dispatch the Oni, three more Houdai move in for the kill. Be on your guard!



Exit from that room and head down another shaft via the floating platform, taking out Houdai as you go.

Caution

Keep a wary eye on the walls of the shaft because you'll quickly pass two floating columns.



As you continue down the shaft, you come across two wall crawlers: one on each side of the shaft.



Down the next shaft is a floating column just underneath the platform you entered on, and a Houdai waits nearby.

Stage 6A Nakotomi Factory



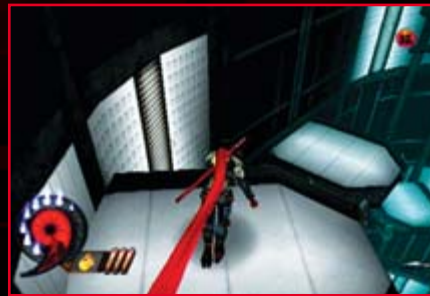
A second column is a little down and to the left of the doorway. It's flanked by a Houdai and a nearby wall crawler.



The final column in this shaft is just opposite the barrier, at the very bottom. Watch that you don't take a bath in the liquid sludge below.



As you enter the next room, jump and dash across the chasm to collect the essence arranged in a nice straight line for Hotsuma.



Look down and pick your way from platform to platform, each jutting out from the wall of this large shaft. There's five columns in all, interspersed with a few Houdai here and there.





At the bottom of the shaft, opposite the exit, is a large concrete slab; once you touch down on either it or the landing leading to the exit, four Houdai and an Oni appear. Take out the Houdai near the exit, then vault across the chasm to chop down the Oni for their valuable essence.



"I Am Sorry, My Master..."



Kizami, once again, is a former member of the Oboro clan now unwillingly placed under the sway of the ill-willed Hiruko. He doesn't want to fight, but he must; he is a formidable warrior, so be ready.



Rule number one when dealing with Kizami: he will *not* attack you unless you step foot in the water running the length of the level. If you stay on the walls, he will not meddle with you.



If you do step in the water, he'll launch incredibly deadly energy beams at you, so stay dry!

Stage 6A Nakotomi Factory



The key to defeating Kizami lays in the Houdai that appear a minute or so into the conflict. You must run along the walls, slashing them as you go. Power up as much as humanly possible, target Kizami, stun him with a shuriken, then cut him up. This is the only safe way to beat him.

Note

It is ill-advised to go after Kizami either without stunning him or without being seriously powered up. He will attack without mercy and will destroy you faster than any other boss in the game thus far.



Keep on eye on the Houdai; they become increasingly deadly as the fight wears on, firing incredibly destructive laser beams. If you let them live for too long, they'll fill the screen with a grid of solid energy.

Tip

When taking out the Houdai, do *not* lock on to them. Instead, "freehand" it by running along the walls and cutting them down and/or dashing and slashing into them. The only time you really want to lock on to something here is when you're going after Kizami.



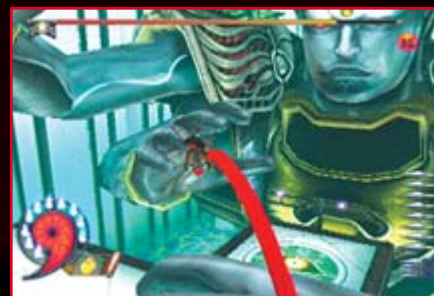
Stage 6B

Demon Machine Yatsurao



Yatsurao was destroyed by the Oboro 72 years ago.

Kizami freed from his cursed existence, Hotsuma finally comes face to face with Hiruko for the first time. Unfortunately, he won't be carving his name in Hiruko's hide just yet. Right now he has to deal with the demon machine Yatsurao, and it seems he's eager to even an old score with a previous Shinobi.



This entire stage (one large room) revolves around the clockwork "god" Yatsurao. Go straight ahead and up the ramp to behold him in his demonic glory.

Tip

You may want to adjust the camera so that you're staring up at Yatsurao's head. It can make keeping track of his various attacks much simpler.

Stage 6B Demon Machine Yatsurao



As is typically the case, Yatsurao has several weaknesses that Hotsuma can exploit. For starters, his only soft spot is his face, so you must jump and dash to strike him in his jaw to cause any damage at all. Jump backward after the strike to clear the gap below.



Mind his four mighty arms. The lower two will attempt to sweep Hotsuma into a wall, crushing him with many tons of force. Both his upper and lower arms will attempt to grind you up between them, so always keep an eye on them.



If you see his eyes sparkling, stay away! He'll stun you and you'll watch hopelessly as Hotsuma falls in the drink down below or, if you're farther away, he'll zap you.

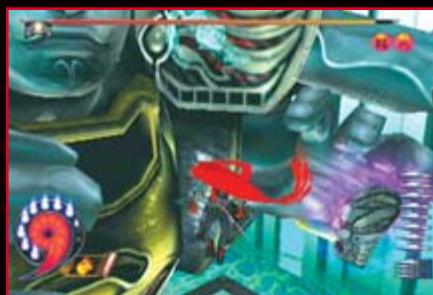


If you stand back, just at the edge of the ramp, he'll also try to shell you with energy bolts. Never stand back there.

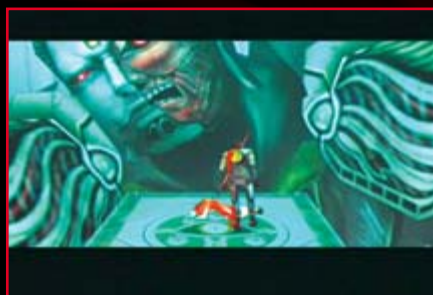


The final move in his inhuman arsenal is a frosty blast of air from his gaping ice-cold maw.





The trick to quickly finishing him off lays in the floating heads he spits out periodically. Chew up a batch of those with Akujiki, then launch yourself at Yatsurao's huge head to do some serious damage.



Repeat the power-up-and-slash process until you bring Yatsurao down hard.

Caution

On many occasions, as you're powering up Akujiki, Yatsurao takes the opportunity to smash the floating heads and Hotsuma if he happens to be there when he claps, so watch yourself!

Uh Oh



I feel... its power flooding through my veins! Bwahahaha!!



You cannot kill your own brother? Even with that tainted blade?

After destroying Yatsurao, Hiruko, rather than Akujiki, claims the demon god's power and returns himself to a youthful state. Unfortunately, Moritsune shows up (think back to stage 2B) and stops Hotsuma from destroying him. With that, they both teleport away, leaving Hotsuma more enraged than ever.



Stage 7A

Deadly Garden

Stage 7A

Deadly Garden

Note

Things start to get hairy on this level. Hotsuma must face large pack after large pack of antisocial enemies without the benefit of much healing in between. Remember your training and don't forget your ninja magic!



Immediately upon entering the stage, you are set upon by two female ninja, a Tengu, and two kawara zako (more floating heads). As you take down each one, another foe joins the fray, ranging from more female ninja to more kawara.



With that small army crushed, head up the nearby pathway and through the double doors (there's some health in the torch to the right). As you come upon some shuriken, four female ninja strike!



Head up the slope past where the barrier stood, and you come across two Tengu and four kawara. Strike them down (get the kawara first) and claim the nearby ninja magic.



Now head around behind the house to find a talisman waiting patiently for your arrival.



Head back down the ramp and to the right, through the double doors, and you meet with three female ninjas and a kawara.

Tip

Female ninjas are knocked back very easily from Hotsuma's blows; remember to press the attack by dashing as they spin out of reach!



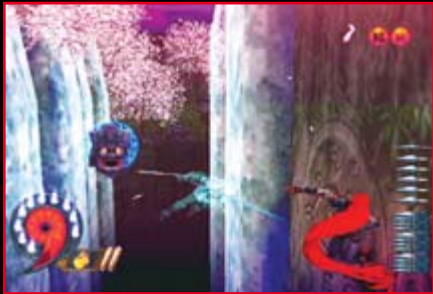
Farther up the slope, you face two more female ninjas and three more kawara. Hack and slash to bring them down.



Continue through the next set of double doors, past a raging waterfall, and into a larger area with multiple falls and a shuriken.

Stage 7A

Deadly Garden



Shuriken in hand, note the kawara up the chasm a bit. You can hit him with a shuriken. Or, work your way out to him; mount the wall and work your way to the edge of the first fall, jump away from the wall, jump again and dash toward the wall on the opposite side of the first fall.



From here, you can launch yourself at the kawara, then dash to the next spot of safe wall.



Once more you see another kawara. Toss a shuriken at him, or make your way to the next spot of wall, then destroy him.



One final leap, and you must maul a Tengu before moving on. Try to get behind him and push him off the ledge. Whatever you do, do not be near the ledge when he attacks; he'll push you off.



Proceed up the slope to confront a small army of female ninja and a set of kawara. Watch your back and use your shuriken to stun a few if things get too messy.



Proceed through the next set of double doors to reach a small five-woman squad of ninjas guarding some shuriken.



Head up the slope (not through the doors), where you confront five kawara defending a health pick-up. Take them apart with skill, then five more show up. With them out of the way, grab the salve.



Go back and through the double doors leading upward to take on a quartet of furious female ninjas.



Farther up the slope, you face two more female ninja and three kawara. Show them your sharp, shiny tool up close.



A Tengu, a female ninja, and two kawara arrive on the scene. Sharpen your blade on their carcasses and collect the health the Tengu graciously leaves behind.



Continue through the next set of double doors, which open into a peaceful glade populated by a female ninja and three kawara.

Stage 7A *Deadly Garden*



Next come two female ninja, two kawara, and a Tengu. Take out the weaker kawara and ninja, then cut down the terrible Tengu.



With that batch packed away, the next wave features another Tengu, three kawara, and two female ninja. Carefully pick apart the weaker links, then smash the Tengu for the large health pick-up.



Next up are two kawara and a female ninja. Try not to laugh as you slice up this sad rear guard.



Head up the slope leading out of the dinner hall, and you come to an open area with a chasm to the left and a Tengu and three female ninja dead ahead. Try to herd them into the far right corner and grind them up there to prevent any of them from pushing you into the pit.



Line up with the shuriken across the gorge, then double jump and dash your way to it.



From there, jump and dash through the wooden fence blocking your way to the next area. Each torch flanking the archway has some health, so go get it.



You are now oppressed by a force eight strong: three Tengu and five kawara. Take down as many kawara as possible, then use your fully juiced sword to let loose the dogs of war on the Tengu.

Tip

Don't forget: Striking enemies in the back is a much quicker way to dispatch foes because it does much greater damage, especially with a supercharged Akujiki.

Ageha Shows Her True Colors

The apparent destruction of Tokyo and the Oboro clan was directly the result of Ageha setting Hiruko free in order to bring about the revival of Moritsune. Though her intentions were noble, she has caused much pain and suffering. It's time to cause a little pain and suffering of your own.



Stage 7A *Deadly Garden*



When dealing with Ageha, it comes down to two things: shuriken and a powered-up Akujiki. Although she deals out some pretty nasty damage, if you stay mostly airborne, Hotsuma will be able to bear the brunt of it.



Stun Ageha with shuriken and slash her three times with each successful stun. Mind you, she's fast, so try to be behind her when you unleash a knife or she'll dodge it.



Spend too much time on the ground, and Ageha will come at you from all directions with her blinding speed.



Not long into the battle, she summons spirits to help her stop you. Too bad for her that Akujiki likes spirit blood as much as mortal and demon blood. Power up your sword, stun her with a star, and cut her to ribbons.



Three sets of three powered-up strokes will crush her (though less will do if you pick away at her at the outset of the battle) and remind her that misplaced loyalty is one of the most grievous of sins to the ninja.

Stage 7B

Brother Against Brother



Ageha!



Hehehe... BWAHAHAHAHA!!
Now, the ritual is complete!



This is it, the hour of reckoning: brother against brother. Although Moritsune is acting under the influence of the demon lord Aozimuchi, he leaves Hotsuma little choice. Let the battle rage!



Moritsune is a pretty tough nut to crack. His slashing attacks, superquick dash, and electrical bolts can cripple Hotsuma faster than you can say "uncle," and never mind his white-hot energy geyser.



Once more, the key to defeating Moritsune is to keep moving *at all times*. Don't stop to catch your breath. Keep ticking away at him, locking, jumping, dashing, and slashing. To play it safe, take only three strokes (maximum) with each assault, and only when his back is turned.



After a short period, small dragons start to crop up on the killing field; slay them to power up Akujiki and make Hotsuma's life much easier.

Tip

Let as many dragons on screen as you can at one time. Let three or four group around you, kill them, power up Akujiki, and claim, perhaps, two more a bit farther out. With more than five kills, you will be able to kill Moritsune in two strokes!



The small statues in the middle of the stage contain health pick-ups if you need them.



The longer the battle wages, the more aggressive Moritsune will become, so be wary of his hellish multistroke sword combo.

"I'll Be with You Always"



Aozimuchi defeated, Moritsune's soul is freed. He joins Akujiki's blade and lends his strength to Hotsuma's own. Now it's time to take the fight to Hiruko himself, and all the demons in hell won't be able to save him.

Stage 7B Brother Against Brother

Stage 8A

The Golden Palace



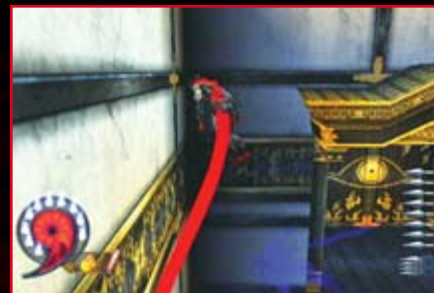
The 7 Stars of the Heavens and their earthly counterparts are complete.



All that is left is for him to come...



Hiruko, wearing a mask of utter glee, anxiously awaits Hotsuma's timely arrival. Why does this madman so desperately want Hotsuma to storm his home, destroying his servants along the way?



As the stage opens, turn immediately to your right, mount the wall, and make your way onto the archway from which you entered the stage from. A talisman is there.



From the top of the archway, note the column off to the left. Double jump, dash, and slash it from the sky.



With the first column down, head along the rough toward the corner, and you are assaulted by five kawara. Annihilate them.

Stage 8A The Golden Palace



Just up the next rough, you can spy column number two. Bring it back to earth with a quick strike.



From there, look out and note the shuriken hovering over a nearby rooftop. Double jump and dash to bag it.



Take a gander down to spot another column. Do your thing and smack it into little pieces.



After you crush that column, three kawara show up. Show them your rock-breaking technique.



Make your way across the nearby gap, scale the wall, and destroy the last column.



Make your way through the next corridor and collect the essence as you work your way along the wall.



After you pass through the next doorway, you come upon two winged ninja and two kawara. Mind where your feet are (it's a long way down) and terminate them rapidly.



Caution

This entire stage takes place on floating pagodas, so always be careful of where you jump, step, and dash. If you miss a roof or the side of a building, there's no coming back.



Note the shuriken on the side of a building just off in the distance. Make your way over to it with your patented jump-dash combo.



From there, hop to the wall to the right. A kawara appears, so make your way to the wall to the left and cut him loose.



Now swing around and note the other kawara that just popped in. Lock onto him and dash at him to take him out, then dash to the wall for safety.



From here, make a stunning leap to the left. Double jump, then dash at the last possible minute to land safely.



When you land, three kawara are there to greet you. Say "hi" in your unique way.



Follow the rooftops, where you come upon a surly band of kawara and winged ninja. Judicious use of shurikens will send many of them plunging to their deaths. If you want to go the combo route, let them come to you.

Stage 8A The Golden Palace



Just down from the bulk of the fighting, you can find some ninja magic. Gather that up, then make your way up the wall and through the doorway.



As you progress through the next corridor, you come across five kawara gumming up the works. If you're feeling skilled, combo them from the air. If not, toss shuriken at them to make sure that you get some of their essence.



Around the following bend, you come across three more. Repeat the previous procedure to end their little party.



Through the next doorway, head forward and finish off three kawara and a winged ninja.



Note the building off in the distance. Double jump and dash out to it.



Double jump and dash to make your way to the rooftop over to the right.



Off in the distance are four kawara bobbing in the sky. Launch Hotsuma out into thin air, double jump, lock on, and dash and slash the first one. Repeat this process until the four are dead (it will take two or three slashes to kill the first one, so continue dashing!) When the last one dies, dash immediately forward to the next rooftop and claim the talisman. Pat yourself on the back.



From here you have two options. If you need health, work your way around the structure you're on to the opposite side and a health pick-up.



Otherwise (or after you claim the health), make your way onto the wall facing the rest of the level and safety. Launch Hotsuma away from the wall, double jump (stagger the second jump), and dash at the last second to make it safely across.



Once across, continue forward toward the next doorway and collect the shuriken on your way through.

Stage 8A The Golden Palace



As you make a left, six kawara show up. If you need the essence, dispatch them via combo or shuriken; otherwise, pass them by.



As you enter the next area, head straight ahead to deal viciously with four kawara waiting to deliver the same fate to Hotsuma.



Just across the way, floating before a wall, is a stone column. Send a shuriken speeding on its way to deal with that.



Continue to follow the rough as it winds around toward another column and a shuriken. Leap out and grab the shuriken, then make your way up to the column.



Just as you shatter it, a small army of winged ninja (four) and kawara (four of those, also) appear. Launch yourself into the air and start slicing and dicing, but watch your step!



Once they're all out of commission, look into the upper corner to see another column. Get over and smash it, then make your way back down.



You now notice a talisman wedged between a wall and a building. Clamber out onto the wall to claim the talisman, then make your way up the wall to the next rooftop.



Follow the roof past the barrier and to the next column. Toss a shuriken at it, then head through the doorway.



Make your way through the next corridor, scooping up the essence strewn about, then head through the next doorway.



Once through, smash two kawara, two winged ninja, and their Oni buddy.



Take out the weaker critters first, then slay the Oni.



Once you dispatch the Oni, notice the column peering through three floating buildings. Make your way toward it from wall to wall, minding the pair of kawara between you and it.



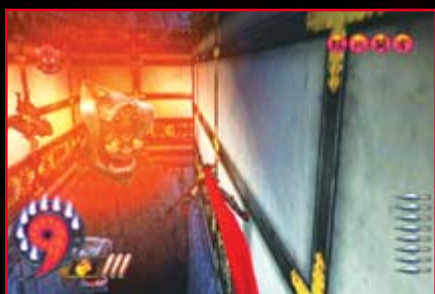
Once the column crumbles, make your way to the next set of buildings in the distance to the next two columns (just as you did on the similar level earlier); slash one and toss shuriken at the other.



Make your way to the next rooftop over and a throwdown with a batch of kawara and winged ninja. Send them all plummeting to the pits of hell.



The next column is over the side on a ridge just below the doorways. Drop down and dust it, then make your way through the doorway above.



As you head through the next corridor, you are accosted by five kawara and a lone winged ninja. If you need to, drag them from the sky.



As you enter the final area, tackle the first three kawara and a winged ninja that you stumble upon.



Leap out to the ridge joining to buildings. From there, make your way to the left around the structure until you're moving between the wall and the building. Down low and inside is the last talisman of the stage.



Make your way past one final large gap, and it's time for a battle royale that wasn't. Immediately strike down four or five kawara, ignore the Oni, and attack the large doors waiting ahead of you. One powered-up slash will crush it, and it's on to the next, and final, stage.

Stage 8A The Golden Palace

Stage 8B

The End of the Road



The final assault begins now.



As the stage begins, immediately run forward and cut down the paper wall separating Hotsuma from the hallway, then cut down the one across the hall.



Inside you spot a column. Run in and destroy it.



From there, turn right and head down the hallway. Take out the floating column at the end of the hall.



Turn around and break down the wall to get to another column. There's also a Mokugiyo and two of his ninja pals waiting inside.

Tip

You don't have to fight the creatures in the rooms with floating columns. If you don't need to feed Akujiki, simply throw a shuriken at it from the safety of the hallway.



Bounce across the hall and through the wall where the barrier stood to snag some shuriken, then tear down the next wall.



As you enter the next room, four Mokugiyo materialize before you and one Oni behind. Smoke the Mokugiyo first, then drop the Oni.



Head through the next two walls (the second across the hall) to another column. Three Mokugiyo await you.



Head back into the hallway and venture left, to the barrier and another column.



Turn around and crash through the wall to the right. You find a column, two Mokugiyo, and a ninja waiting inside.



Across the hall is yet another column, a cadre of ninja, and a lone Mokugiyo.



Head out and down the hallway to the right. Break through the first wall on the left and claim the health pick-up within. Note that it comes with four ninja and a Mokugiyo, so weigh the benefits before going in.



Head across the hall, smash on through, and dispatch the three Mokugiyo and two ninja lying in wait.



Now head back to the hall and turn right. Take out the next wall on the left. Break through for a shuriken, two ninja, and two Mokugiyo.



Head across the hall, through the next wall, to another shuriken. After you grab it, two Mokugiyo show up behind Hotsuma.



Break through the next wall, and you must deal with three ninja. Teach them what it really means to be one.



As you storm through the next wall, four Mokugiyō and an Oni will appear. Take out the Mokugiyō, working your way up the hall to chop up the Oni.



Turn around and head through the wall to the right. You find another column, this one all alone.



Head back out into the hall and turn right. Break through the next wall on the right to find the next column.



Take a right and smash the next column to dispel the barrier blocking Hotsuma's righteous path.



As you head toward the bend, four Mokugiyō try to liven up your day. Deaden them properly, then keep moving.



Make your way into the first larger room and leap over to grab the shuriken hanging on the wall.



Head up the three floating platforms to a larger one flanked by two Mokugiyō. Pelt them with shuriken, then slash them to ribbons.



Now clamber up the next three floating platforms to shatter three floating columns, then head through the barrier.



In the next room, mount the floating platform and nail the column as it lifts Hotsuma into its presence.

Stage 8B

The End of the Road



Column checked, move forward to grab the shuriken, then reel in the two nearby Mokugiyō, minding their fireballs as they approach.



To the left, you can spot a column. Employ another well-placed shuriken to shatter that one.



Hop on the floating platform directly ahead. As it climbs, jump up and hit the column directly overhead, then turn right and shuriken the other.



Now look to the left corner and notice, when the platform is all the way down, a talisman. Double jump and dash out to the left wall to gather it.



Make your way up the wall and through the doorway down the hall, and you come across four ninja guarding a barrier. Take 'em out!



Continue down the hall to the next barrier, and four more ninja accost you. Do a little ninja dance on their heads.



In the next room, you find three Mokugiyō watching over some ninja magic. Work some magic on the Hellspawn, then grab the scroll.



Now you'll want to continue making your way up the wall, avoiding various fireballs and the Mokugiyō themselves, then shimmy your way up the ledge to tool them.



After that arduous ascent, jump and dash to the column resting on the side of the stairwell. Mind the ninja who pops in to give you some grief.



Leap down to the opposite wall to get the second column.



Drop into the well below and take out the ninja lurking down there.



When they're finished, head forward to hit the next column, then proceed through the now open doorway.



In the next room, you must deal with two Mokugiyo, two ninja, and an Oni. As usual, get the weaker enemies first, then take on the Oni.



Drop down the hole at the far end of the room and head down the hall until you encounter four ninja to quench Akujiki's thirst.



Continue on, and you encounter two Mokugiyo and two ninja. It wasn't like Akujiki was full anyway.



Finally, you come across a barrier a little farther, where Akujiki can feast until he's stuffed on four more ninja.



After the barrier disintegrates, Hotsuma immediately comes upon some ninja magic.



Head up the large steps to the right and take out the lone ninja you come across. Chances are, you'll launch him into space.



Note

From this point on, it gets very difficult to feed Akujiki because you'll be very busy trying not to fall a long, long way, while, at the same time, preventing the same from happening to your foes. After all, if they don't die by the blade, Akujiki doesn't get to eat. So proceed carefully and do your best to make strategic kills along the way.



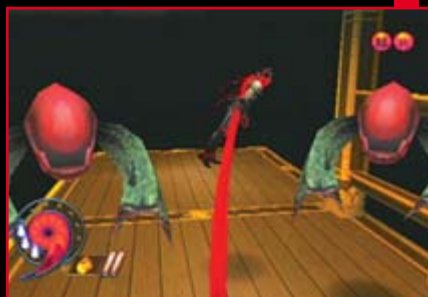
Continue on, up the next set of steps and have two Mokugiyo for dinner. Then double jump and dash across the gap.



On the next landing are two ninja. Keep them pinned against the wall so they can't fall off the side while you're hacking them.



Once again, head across the next gap and dispatch the trio of ninja on the next ledge, then double jump and dash across to the other side.



On the next landing are two more Mokugiyo. Make short work of them, and it's over the next gap Hotsuma goes.



Two ninja and two Mokugiyo await you on the next ledge. Leap and destroy both Mokugiyo, then come back and pin down the ninja.



The next ledge over, across another gap, you find four more ninja to sate Akujiki's growing hunger.



Over on the next landing, you find three Mokugiyo. Helpfully, they'll come to you, so reel them in and make mincemeat pie.

Stage 8B

The End of the Road





The next (and almost final) ledge features two ninja and three Mokugiyo. Destroy the ninja, then use the Mokugiyo (if you're up to it) to climb to the next ledge. Otherwise, toss shuriken at them and jump across the gap.



For the next-to-last battle, you face four kawara and an Oni. Cut down the kawara and annihilate the Oni, then it's on to the final showdown with Hiruko.

Hiruko Unleashed



This is it: the culmination of Hotsuma's quest, and the end of the road to vengeance. All that stands between him and peace is the death of Hiruko, menace to the Oboro clan from times past. You've vanquished his demon hordes and struck down the god he hoped to resurrect. Now it's time for him to taste the kiss of Akujiki, the blade he so desperately needs to complete his infernal ends.

The Powers of a Dark God

The following magical attacks are Hiruko's primary offenses. We describe each and the best way to deal with it. Note that he calls out *all* of these attacks, so you'll know what's coming next.

The Fires of Hell



He summons forth a gigantic, slow-moving fireball that does grave damage. This is very easy to dodge.

The Icy Touch of Death



He calls forth four large balls of ice that will freeze Hotsuma in place so that its siblings can do further damage. Keep dashing away as the balls cruise toward Hotsuma.

The Power of the Heavens



Hiruko summons three intense bolts of lightning traveling in a straight line. Simply dash away from Hiruko as he calls them.

The Power of the Earth



He summons a wave of meteors that will fan out at Hotsuma. These are also easy to dodge; simply jump straight up to hurdle over them.

Spirits of the Netherworld



A direct hit from this attack will cause very grave damage to Hotsuma. Unlike the others, you can't keep your back turned when Hiruko unleashes it. Giant laserlike beams rake across the screen. Place Hotsuma between one of the gaps to avoid their wrath.



As the battle opens, Hiruko merely toys with Hotsuma by issuing a few attacks sporadically. At this point, you must start slashing him whenever you get the chance, and you'll get only one hit before he teleports away. Keep this up for six hits, then the battle begins in earnest.

Caution

When he teleports out into thin air, it's best to wait until he comes back to solid ground (during the initial combat phase). Although it is possible to jump out, slash him, and jump-dash back, more often than not, you'll face a long trip down.



Once the fences explode away and the two large panels appear to either side of the stage, you know it's on.



From here on, pick your shots carefully. You could conceivably whittle him to death with Akujiki at base level, but it would take *forever*.



Instead, wait for the spirits to start springing up around the stage and use them to power up Akujiki. Once Akujiki is fully juiced, Hiruko-hunting season is open.

Note

You cannot hit Hiruko when he's in the midst of a magical attack, so stand clear until he completes his offensive outbursts.



Once Akujiki is revved up, chase down Hiruko wherever he may be and cut him wide open. Even powered up, Akujiki doesn't do the terrific amount of damage that it has to other enemies.

Stage 8B

The End of the Road



At times, Hiruko engages in a mad flurry of dashes and strikes. You *cannot* counterattack during these onslaughts, so continue dashing until he goes back to exercising his more specialized abilities.



The key to winning this match is patience. If you power up Akujiki but can't find an opening to attack, don't panic; there's always more spirits. Keep in mind that they'll continually drop health pick-ups to keep Hotsuma alive after they're slain.

The Spirits



These wispy creatures are the same ones that possessed and reanimated the Oboro clan throughout much of the adventure (generally plastered to the faces of their victims). They're the key to destroying Hiruko, but they're not defenseless; they'll cast fireballs at Hotsuma, so take them out as quickly as you can so that the screen isn't filled with them, their attacks, and Hiruko casting earth-shattering spells everywhere.



Hiruko will block many frontal assaults. If he does, immediately leap away before he conjures an aura that will push Hotsuma away at a grave price to your life bar.



Withstand his various onslaughts, and gradually you'll wear him down. Eventually, you'll notice that he's not all he's cracked up to be—just a bad man with a thick life bar.



One final stroke, and it's all over...or is it?

Secrets

Just When You Thought It Was All Over...

The enemies have been vanquished, sent screaming back to their home dimension—Hiruko's vile machinations utterly destroyed. But, what's this, there's still more to do? Oh yes...

Hard as Nails

After completing Shinobi on "normal" difficulty, hard mode is automatically opened up. As you might surmise, it's much harder than normal: enemies are more resilient *and* more intelligent. However, you do have a new weapon (nearly) at your disposal: Moritsune. Collect thirty talismans (Oboro clan coins) total, and you'll unlock this faster, stronger and, oddly enough, less-hardy warrior.



Moritsune is Hotsuma's superior in nearly every category except one: Akujiki feeds on him in rapid fashion. This forces you to play the game at a much faster pace than Hotsuma in order to keep him alive.



Outside of that one very important distinction, Moritsune is faster and stronger than his younger brother. He can lay waste to entire packs of enemies in shorter timeframes than Hotsuma can comprehend.



Outside of those differences, Moritsune has the same swath of moves and attacks as Hotsuma—don't forget that if you thought Hotsuma was in a race against the clock, that goes for double in his case.

Super Charged

Now you've struck down Hiruko and his demon-spawn on hard mode and that's that, right? Wrong! Now you've unlocked super difficulty. Once again, enemies are harder and still more intelligent. Also, you'll find that there are still more talismans to be collected. Collect 40 of these and the way will become much easier: say hello to Joe Musashi! The original Shinobi warrior of the Oboro clan!



Unlike Moritsune, Joe is more (and less) than just a modified Hotsuma. For starters, his sword is *much* weaker than even Hotsuma's, but there is one important distinction: Joe isn't wielding Akujiki! What does this mean for you? Quite simply, Joe isn't constantly on the verge of death. He can stand around and not fear his life slowly slipping away due to inaction!



The other, very important, difference is that Joe is much more shuriken-focused: as opposed to Hotsuma and Moritsune, Joe has (a) unlimited shurikens, and (b) his shurikens are more damaging (they aren't used so much for stunning as they are for killing). Essentially, you'll play Joe in a much different manner than his clansmen, tossing clutches of shurikens at foes to soften them up for the deep kiss of Joe's blade or to outright destroy them. This forces a fundamental shift in gameplay and makes Joe an interesting diversion from either Hotsuma or Moritsune.



That doesn't mean, however, that Joe can't hack and cleave with the best of them—it simply means that it takes a bit more time for his sword to be powered up to the same level as the two brothers. This is particularly apparent on boss levels as they're much trickier (especially Hiruko's stage) with Joe.

Secrets
It's Not Over

Interview

Prima Games Chats with Shinobi Developer, Sega Overworks

While they may not be a household name along the lines of other Sega studios such as Sonic Team (Sonic the Hedgehog et al) and AM2 (Virtua Fighter, etc.), Overworks has made a small name for themselves with the Dreamcast RPG Skies of Arcadia (soon to bow on Nintendo GameCube™) and, in Japan, the Sakura Wars series. To learn more about the team behind these titles (and Shinobi, of course) we sat down with Overworks for this exclusive interview:

PG: Why has a new Shinobi been so long in coming?

SO: We had plans to develop it even when we were Saturn/Dreamcast. But since Shinobi is such a huge franchise, we could not begin until we were thoroughly satisfied with the project. So it kept being put off.

So, when Sega began development over multi-platforms and we decided to begin developing games for the PlayStation®2, the issue was no longer that of a transplant game but it became that of developing a whole new game. So we decided that we wanted to release it as a strong, worldwide contender. Then we decided that Shinobi's launch would be best suited to the PlayStation®2, and then we embarked on its development.

PG: What was the impetus that led to Shinobi's revival? Fans clamoring for it? Revival of interest in the ninja mystique?

SO: As mentioned earlier, the biggest reason was the timing and that we were able to come up with a great plan that fit in nicely with that timing. Also, ninja-related games have been rare lately and so we predicted that it would seem fresh in the marketplace.

PG: How long has it been in development?

SO: It took about two years from when the plan was formulated, or one-and-a-half years from the time we started work on it.

PG: Did development originate on PlayStation®2 or was it originally intended for Dreamcast?

SO: Right from the start the project was targeted for the PlayStation®2.

PG: How has the PlayStation®2 hardware been to work with?

SO: Since this was our first full-scaled development for the PlayStation®2, at the beginning it didn't progress as smoothly as we had expected. But I believe that in the end we arrived at a satisfactory product.

We felt that there wasn't enough illustrative power but no matter how high the specs, game creators will always complain about the "insufficiencies." So, you just have to grin and bear it I guess.

PG: Is it PlayStation®2 exclusive or will we see it on Nintendo GameCube™ and/or Xbox™?

SO: We are considering platforms other than the PlayStation®2. I believe that we'll look at the market and I hope that we'll bring it out in another format if the opportunity presents itself.

PG: How many people are on the team? What other games have they worked on?

SO: At its largest we had 50 people. Most of them worked on developing Eternal Arcadia (Skies of Arcadia) and Sakura (Cherry Blossom) War. Also we were able to get people who had worked on the old Ninja series to act as advisors.

PG: Who is the project lead? What else has he or she worked on?

SO: The project's core was made up of the following three people (Present or past work is listed in the parentheses.):

Producer: Takashi Uriu (Net games in Japan, Flag to Flag (DC), etc.)

Chief Director: Masahiro Kumono (Movie Team Leader, Sakura War, Sonic Adventure, etc.)

Director: Toru Shimizu (Eternal Arcadia)

PG: What was the goal with Shinobi?

SO: I will have to explain separately about the goals of the project and the goals of the game. There were two goals for the project. First, we wanted to create a quality product for our first entree into the PlayStation®2 market; one that would be second to none. Then, our goal was to reach a worldwide distribution of at least one million.

As for our goals for the franchise, there were two there as well. First, we wanted a proper revival of the Shinobi brand, so that after 12 years we would make sure that we didn't tarnish it. Then, our second goal was to establish an excellent point of departure for the new Shinobi series.

PG: Are any of the developers from the earlier Shinobi titles working on it?

SO: None are directly involved in development, but some are participating as advisors.

PG: Is Yuzo Koshiro doing any of the music?

SO: No he isn't. He is working for Web Master, a SEGA spin off.

PG: What movies, music, games, etc. inspired the Shinobi staff in the creation of the game?

SO: In Japan there are lots of television dramas and movies that use the samurai or ninja theme. We looked at them in the early stages and they were a major influence at the start of Shinobi. We received a great deal of inspiration from Director Kurosawa Akira's movies and I believe that we also found many useful ideas from current hero movies like Batman, Spawn, Spiderman, etc.

PG: Why did Joe Musashi get replaced as the lead?

SO: Joe Musashi was actually too magnificent and all the players had strong feelings about him and a deep reservoir of memories associated with him. It was thought that it would be too difficult to revive Joe in a manner that would satisfy all the players, so we decided to create a new hero.

PG: Is this the beginning of a planned franchise?

SO: Yes. If the current game is not successful then the next one will not be made. So, we put everything we had into making this product successful. I believe that we will now take our time to assess this game and think about the development of the next one.

PG: What new things does Shinobi bring to video games in general?

SO: I don't believe that it is anything really new in the way of "game to be played." Rather, I have felt recently that there have been a lot of games that seem to be "playing with the player." So I feel that we are returning to what a "game" is, in that it is a "game that is to be played with." This may have the sound of something really new to the young players who don't know anything of MD, NES, etc.

PG: How closely has the game been patterned after past titles in the series?

SO: There is hardly any connection with the story. In addition, since the game went from a 2-D to a 3-D game I can't even say that it is close. However, the strange thing is that I believe that most of the people who played it felt that Shinobi ambiance. Also, we put in some features that should elicit feelings of joy in players who played the earlier Shinobi.

PG: Does Sega have high expectations for the game?

SO: Of course. We anticipate that this will be the most important products released at the end of the year in both North America and Japan.



PG: How is the game being received so far in Japan (pre-release hype, early popularity, etc.)?

SO: There hadn't been much of a response to the release of the clips from the media and users compared to North America, however, the response has been great since we exhibited a playable version at the Tokyo Game Show. I believe that it is now gathering a lot of attention from the media and users alike as being one of the most noteworthy titles that will be released at the end of the year.

PG: Was anything in particular left out due to time constraints, etc.?

SO: The story was greatly abbreviated. We had lots of ideas regarding the game system, motions, and items that we weren't able to realize, but these will be great elements that we can use in the next game, so I won't talk about it here. You can look forward to seeing them in the next game.

PG: What was the biggest challenge to implement for gameplay?

SO: The most important point for an action game is, "how fun is it to enjoy the action?" If each individual movement, sequence, map or camera angle, enemy AI and position, game balance, the level design as a whole, and the system design, etc., doesn't flow together seamlessly then you are experiencing only half of the "fun." This kind of thing is difficult to predict when you're drawing up the plans or making calculations on paper. So after completion of the prototype then every day after that becomes a matter of trial and error. A proper action game should have a definitive response for everything, even if you are "just walking" and no matter how fast and furious your battle is with the enemy, you should be able to feel that you "can move around freely." I feel that on that point Shinobi is successful.

PG: Which aspect of the game is the team most proud?

SO: As I mentioned, we were successful in completing as planned a "game that is to be played." Since I personally believe that lately the number of games has increased where you find that more than half of "play time" feels more like "work" than "play." I am very happy that we were able to create a game that from beginning to end is a game "to play." Also, I think that it is incredible that we were able to release everything "on schedule," without a day's delay over the two-year development schedule. There were some 50 people on the development team and each and everyone is a hero; all of them achieved their goals and I feel so proud in so many ways.

PG: Any tips for playing the game most effectively?

SO: Master "TATE" sword fighting. If you coolly assess your opponent there is always an opening. Skillfully learn to use Lock On, Dash, and Knife Throwing and be sure to take down one opponent at a time. Once you get used to it you will be amazed at how adroitly you will become in killing off your on-screen enemies in the blink of an eye. Also by deciding to use swordplay, more Oni will be drawn out from the enemy and the game will proceed more favorably for you. Also, if you have some leeway during a play, you should adjust the position of the camera to obtain the best angle using the L1 and R3 buttons (right analog stick). It is important that your enemies are in view and to make sure that an airborne enemy's landing site will be in view.

PG: Anything you'd like to say to your fans?

SO: We have been able to accomplish creating a product that is fitting for a revival of Shinobi. I believe that this will be the start of a new Shinobi series. Since this is the first volley of Overworks into PlayStation®2 titles we spared nothing in our endeavors to develop it. The Shinobi series is a new challenge for all fans of action games. Go ahead, enjoy yourself!

Prima Games would like to thank Overworks for taking time out of their very busy schedule to take part in this interview. Great game, guys!

